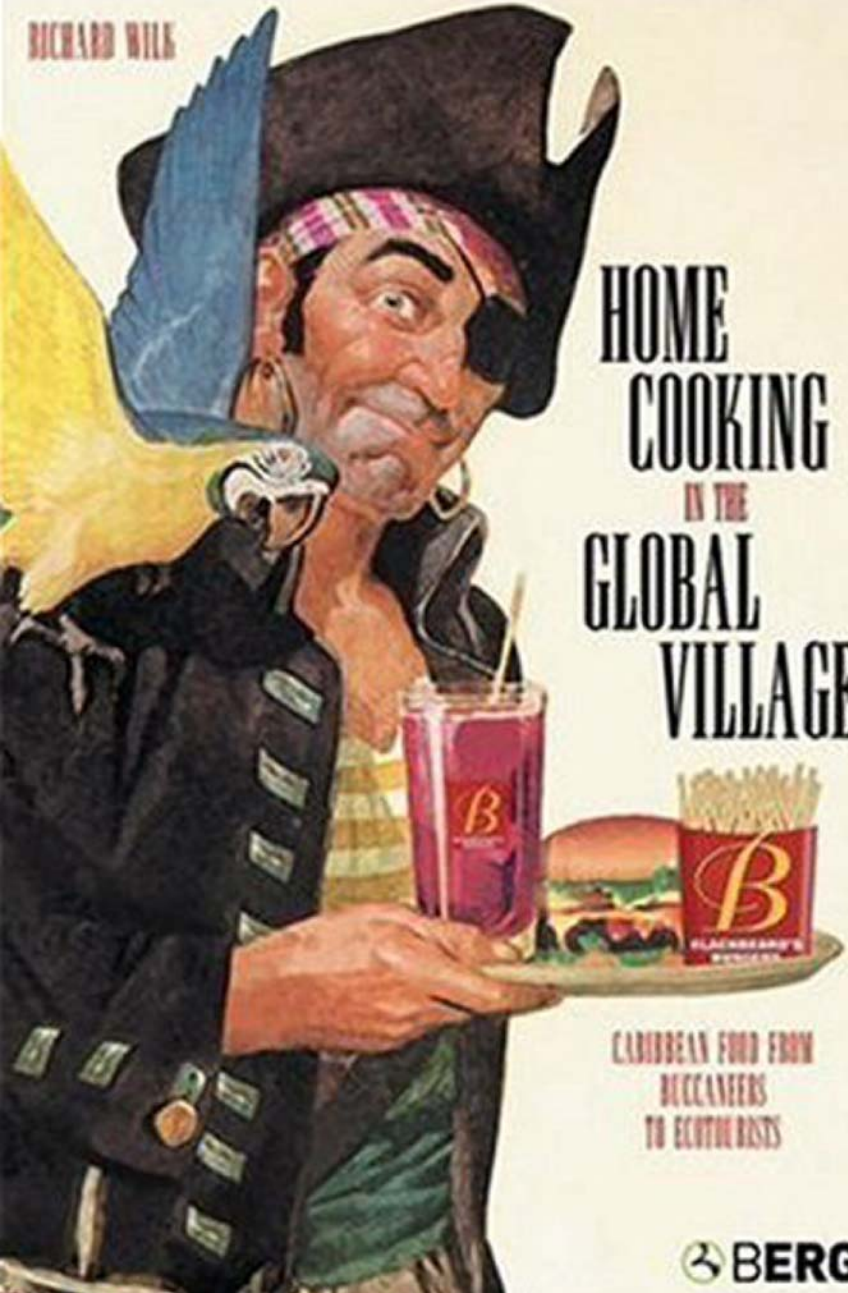
RICHARD WILK

HOME COOKING IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE



CARIBBEAN FOOD FROM BUCCANEERS TO ECOTOURISTS

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Caribbean Food from Buccaneers to Ecotourists

Richard Wilk

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The Global Supermarket

As I write this I have on my desk a colorful bottle of a new "healthy infusion" drink sold in supermarkets in the USA, called Fuze. The flavor is *Mojo Mango*, and the 11 per cent juice includes orange, mango and passion fruit; it contains 100 mg each of guarana and ginseng extract.

I find it fascinating that this bottle is so cosmopolitan, a true multicultural brew, but it is so quiet about it. It does not flaunt its ancestry. Instead of telling us where these exotic juices and essences come from, the writing on the bottle is all about the powers of the ingredients to "increase energy levels" and "relieve stress and nervous tension." Instead of telling us who made the ingredients, the bottle uses their foreign names to send a more general message that they are powerful because they come from far away places. Distance and mystery are part of the magic trapped in the bottle.

But I wanted to know the details. Getting them wasn't simple. Tracking down where all the ingredients came from took me several hours of research on the web, and dozens of Google searches; I was only partly successful. It was impossible to figure out where the crystalline fructose sweetener came from; it is made from high-fructose corn syrup and is sold in bulk as any other industrial chemical. The corn may have been grown in the USA, but it could also have come from Canada, Mexico or Europe, before going through a factory owned by Cargill or one of the other four companies that control corn refining in the USA.

The orange juice could have come from Florida, but Brazil is now the world's biggest producer. Peru, India and Ecuador make the most mango puree, though Mexico, Thailand and the Philippines also ship this sweet syrup. The people who make Fuze may not have known where it came from either. Passion-fruit juice is a big export from Ecuador, though they have had harvest problems lately, so it's possible that these few drops came from Brazil or Colombia. Uganda also exports the stuff, but mostly to Europe. Guarana is a caffeine-rich berry that grows in the Amazon, a favorite soft-drink flavoring in Brazil. That is probably where the 100 mg of extract in the bottle of Fuze came from.

I go back to the bottle itself, but it tells us only that the whole concoction was put together in Englewood, New Jersey, and suggests the ginseng came from Siberia. The ginseng might really have come from Siberia, but China and Korea

are the big exporters, and the vast majority of the ginseng consumed in the USA is grown in Wisconsin. Perhaps "Siberian ginseng" is the name of a variety grown there? We are left with a puzzle, while the sense of exotic power lingers.

North Americans have a long history of believing in the mysterious powers of tropical plants. Our ancestors made tonics from things like sarsaparilla root from Central America, cinchona (quinine) bark from Peru and kola nuts from West Africa. Even sugar, coffee, tea and cocoa started out like Fuze, as foods with medicinal powers, and they only gradually lost that magic. But this bottle offers a lot more than just health and vitality. It also tells us something essential about the power of place, the way the world food system is built like a giant funnel, with *our* mouths underneath the hole at the center.

In the USA at the center of the world economy, we have the rest of the world at our fingertips, at our lips, in our stomachs. Only from our position of power can we afford to ignore where things really come from, because we know that all things drain, like syrup through a pipeline, from the edges of the world into the center. What we want will appear, as if by magic, on the shelves of our supermarkets because we have the money to pay for it. We don't *have to know* – other people grow it and process it, and buy it and sell it until all we see is the *brand*, a language we understand without effort. All those strange substances are *fuzed* together for our convenience, our health and our pleasure.

Like a sports stadium, this vast global food machine looks one way from the center, and it looks completely different from out at the edge. There are no "Red Lobster" restaurants in Honduras, bringing the cornucopia of the world's seafood to diners; instead most Hondurans who fish for lobster can no longer afford to *eat* lobster. Whatever they are willing to pay for a lobster dinner, most Americans can pay more, so the lobsters flow from Honduras to the USA and Canada. Around the world, people are growing, fishing, herding, hunting and then processing and packing for the tables of the rich.

Of course, if they have the money, Hondurans may be able to find a bottle of Fuze, which will eventually turn up in expensive local stores, and maybe even in places like Kathmandu and Johannesburg. The bright bottle with its orange lightning bolt and long list of health claims will carry the power and credibility of America. Young people will see it as the latest thing from the most sophisticated places, and will pay two or three times what I spent this morning. Who would want to drink something as old-fashioned and boring as fresh mango juice or a local passion-fruit soda?

There is no balance of power in this system. The producers are dependent on rich consumers in a way that we are never dependent on them. If the mango crop in Ecuador fails, if there is a health scare and EU or US governments stop imports for a few months, or a bountiful harvest floods the world market so the price plummets, Ecuadoreans lose their jobs, take their kids out of school or migrate. It takes

six years to grow a mango tree – you can't just switch to oranges. But all the Fuze company has to do is find another supplier. If the price of mango pulp goes up too much, they can switch to papaya.

In a world food system that gets bigger and more complex all the time, we are all connected to one another. Does this mean that the planet will become one anonymous mass of consumers, that we will lose individuality, just fast-food customers rushing from sleep to work and back? How fragile is a world so connected and tied together that a change in food fashion in one place can lead to starvation halfway around the world? Are countries becoming more alike as they are evermore joined together, or are we just gathering together on top of a bomb with a burning fuse?

Fast-food Planet?

Recent figures say that the average item of food (out of the 30,000 in the average supermarket) has traveled 1,500–2,000 miles to reach your plate.[1] This exhausting physical journey is nothing compared to the *social* and *cultural* distances crossed by your daily bread, potatoes and noodles. The snow peas in your salad may have been grown by Mayan peasants in the cool highlands of Guatemala. The global food chain that leads from the farms and factories of the whole world to tables of modern Americans is truly one of the supreme accomplishments of the age. Bigger and more complex than any work of engineering, it is paradoxically almost completely invisible. A world's abundance pours daily into EU and American markets without fanfare or fuss, and the machinery is hidden, like the Wizard of Oz, behind a screen. Even the drivers, brokers, shippers, factory workers and buyers who keep the system working see only tiny bits and pieces, single threads woven into a huge complex cloth.

The bounty of the world's food appears almost as an act of magic. It takes detective work to discover the origins of even the most mundane foods. When I send my students off to local supermarkets to find out where foods come from, they return frustrated and baffled. Some cans and packages tell you what country they were packaged in, but not where the ingredients began their journey. And in the meat, seafood and produce sections they often find ignorance, indifference or even hostility. Months of research can be required to find the pedigree of a single jar of pickles.

But as long as the food keeps showing up on the restaurant menus and grocery store shelves, why should we care? There are any number of good reasons. As Marion Nestle argues in her recent book *Safe Food*, national and global food systems determine the safety of the food we eat, as well as the health of workers and the natural environment. There may be worse things than too many carbohydrates in a loaf of bread. In *Fast Food Nation*, Eric Schlosser traces hamburgers

back through a whole chain of injustices, passing from the hands of injured and underpaid workers to corrupt mega-merchants, polluted landscapes and merciless feedlots and factory farms full of sick and overmedicated animals. The sheer scale of these problems can exhaust our sense of alarm, our compassion and social conscience.

A global perspective on food raises even more concerns. Only twenty years ago most people still thought the world's greatest problem was feeding the poor. Since the time of Thomas Malthus, scientists have been telling the public that a growing population will soon reach the limits of food production and face starvation. So far, however, we have stayed ahead of the grim reaper. The growth in world food production has more than kept up with the teeming billions, and will probably continue to rise until the world's population stabilizes toward the middle of the twenty-first century, though at great cost to the natural environment and an increasing dependence on fossil fuels.[2] Famines have largely been the result of warfare, economic problems and transportation failures, rather than a lack of food.[3]

Instead of starvation, on the global scale what we face is a stark *imbalance*. The passing of the millennium marked an epochal point in the history of food – for the first time the number of overweight people on the planet surpassed the number who did not have enough to eat, so the fat have outnumbered the thin.[4] In many countries, diseases caused by overeating and overconsumption are now the leading killers. The imbalance is even more stark in many poorer countries like Brazil, where the rich are not just growing richer, but also fatter, while a large portion of the rural population still does not have enough to eat.

But food is more than nutrition or a physical substance that flows through the economy. Food is packed with meaning, as well as vitamins, carbohydrates and protein. It satisfies needs beyond those of the body and the pocketbook.[5] Food is a medium to build families, religious communities, ethnic boundaries and a consciousness of history. Many people yearn for a time when we were even more intimately connected to our food.

Wendell Berry takes this yearning as the center of a political philosophy, cursing the modern industrial diet as a "degraded, poor, and paltry thing." Instead of eating an "inert anonymous substance" you should "buy the food produced closest to your home."[6] This way food will reconnect us to nature, the land and our neighbors. On the one hand, you have a huge, impersonal and corrupt system that spits out endless fast-food burgers, and, on the other, a vision of thriving local farms and markets, and families sitting down with their neighbors for home-cooked meals. We can then see our past as a kind of biblical fall from grace. Once we ate organic foods in the garden of Eden, but since then we have fallen steadily downward toward the drive-through line at McDonald's. Furthermore, this transition is now happening everywhere in the world. The fast-food nation is herald of the fast-food planet.

Apocalyptic stories find a ready audience in troubled times. Despite the tradition of optimism and faith in a modern technological future that is so common in the United States (and to a lesser extent in Europe, and many other parts of the world), people are still easily persuaded by visions of corruption and decay. The ideology of modernity and progress seems to cast a silent shadow, a worry that instead of climbing toward the light, we are actually descending into hell. Utopian and visionary thinkers such as Wendell Berry are like the Old Testament prophets who warn us that while we may think things are fine and getting better, moral decay is slowly rotting the foundations of our world. As the proverb says, "Pride goeth before a fall." What looks like vast global abundance, flowing from modern technology and free markets, is actually killing nature, our bodies and our souls.

This is powerful stuff. These are very old stories that resonate in many cultures. Because food is a necessity that we take into our bodies every day, it is a potent symbol of our dependence on the wider world. Food stands for all the anxieties, fears and joys associated with modernity. As sweetness and sharing food represent all that is good, poison and betrayal of trust represent all evils. It is no wonder that when modern people think about food, they easily fall into utopian or dystopian dichotomies. We have slow vs fast, local vs global, traditional vs modern and organic vs industrial.[7]

But why does modernity create such a hunger for stories with clear moral lessons, both about the promise of an abundant future, and the coming apocalypse? How is it possible to be simultaneously an optimist and a pessimist, to hold such contradictory and polarized views about the future? Rather than hypocrisy, or a failure of logic through emotion, I think these contradictions say something profound about the nature of the world and human affairs. Combining the messages of optimists and pessimists tells us that pleasures have costs, that the great benefits that flow from the modern industrial economy carry with them equally great dangers. And those costs are not evenly distributed around the world; the people who pay the price are not always the people who reap the benefits. At some times, to use the title of a Ry Cooder song, "The very thing that makes you rich, makes me poor" (to which I would add, "and vice versa").

Thinking more Clearly about Globalization

Food and drink are an essential part of the way we think about globalization. The most prominent symbols of globalization today are probably the golden arches of McDonald's and the Coca-Cola logo. *The Economist* magazine's "McDonald's index" compares the cost of living around the world by looking at the local price of a Big Mac, which shows it is a kind of universal currency. Photos of yaks hauling cases of Coke into Himalayan valleys are emblematic of the global reach of consumer culture, confirming a common perception that this is an age of

unprecedented global uniformity. Food and drink are the cutting edge of the spread of mass consumer culture to every single part of the globe.

Most people see this spread of consumer culture as something recent, superficial and destructive to "authentic" local, national and folk culture. After all, consumer culture represents uniformity, the spread of Western goods, and therefore the loss of the diversity of rich local tradition. The prospect of global "monoculture" has led many to worry about the end of cultural diversity, and to want to save and protect endangered traditions, communities and ways of life from the onslaught of mass culture and Westernization.[8] Others accept the inevitability of globalization but want to compromise and reduce its impact, by adapting and preserving local and ethnic traditions of food, music, dance and language.

The high value put on all kinds of cultural diversity is a strong theme in Western culture, a legacy, perhaps, of the nineteenth-century German romantic tradition that was so important in the founding of the social sciences. Alarm over the global spread of a uniform culture is no longer confined to the West, however. In most countries around the world people on both the left and the right express fear that their traditional and local ways of life are under assault, being polluted or displaced by foods, music, entertainment and cultural values that come from the West, and particularly from the United States.[9] On the other hand, authors like the conservative political scientist Samuel Huntington favor the spread of American culture and values, and see it as the only viable alternative to a world of fundamentalism and chaotic clashes between traditions.[10]

But is globalization really crushing all the world's cultural diversity into a single uniform mold? Are we losing *cultural* diversity at the same terrible pace as we are destroying ecological richness? If so, we should also be concerned that *culinary diversity* is disappearing under a monotonous food landscape of burgers and fries. But over the last decades many studies of global culture have challenged the dogma of global uniformity. Preservationism has been superseded by the concepts of resistance, hybridity and appropriation. Each has various shadings, and an individual intellectual pedigree, but they represent three different possible results when local cultures are integrated into global economic and cultural systems.[11]

Resistance means rejection, either through direct action like burning down a McDonald's restaurant, or indirectly by limiting the amount of foreign programing shown on television and arresting women who wear "Western" dress. While most people in North America and Europe think that in the long run, when it comes to consumer culture, "resistance is futile," there are millions or even billions of people who have not given up the fight. Of course, there are some scholars who glorify any kind of resistance, which provides the pleasure of championing the underdog, and the pathos of a timeless tragedy, repeated through history.

Hybridity is best described in Ulf Hannerz's well-known article "*The World in Creolization*."[12] Instead of a grey world of cultural uniformity, Hannerz sees a

process that constantly throws out creative new mixtures of local cultures, where the "global" is no more than a huge arena where these hybrid forms move from place to place. This is a world where reggae emerges from the slums of Kingston, and mixes with hundreds of other local musical styles, in a kind of creative ferment that leads to Australian Aboriginal reggae played with a didgeridoo and Japanese Rastafarians winning Jamaican DJ competitions. Chinese entrepreneurs in Guangdong take the McDonald's fast-food concept and blend Chinese regional cuisines into a successful chain like California Beef Noodle King, which is now expanding into Europe.

Hannerz's idea of creolization allows people to move through a global marketplace without losing their cultural identities; they just have to keep up the creative acts that lie at the core of all cultures, even ones that seem highly traditional. Instead of nostalgia for the past, we should welcome all kinds of new traditions, and be open to the blending that lets us combine sushi with hamburgers at a school picnic.

While creolization is a free process of mixture, *appropriation* is a reversal of globalization. Instead of absorbing and destroying local cultures, through appropriation a local culture absorbs and then neutralizes the invader by transforming it into something that "fits" its own history. Many scholars, for example, have argued that Japanese culture has, for thousands of years, absorbed food, dance, religion and a host of other cultural elements from abroad, without losing its continuity and identity.[13] Baseball, for example, did not turn the Japanese into Americans, but instead baseball became Japanese.[14] Similarly, Americans have adopted and appropriated sushi without becoming culturally more Japanese. For some people, this argument comes down to an issue of power; only the dominant cultures in the global arena are capable of choosing and appropriating whatever they want from the cultures of the world. Other groups inevitably suffer cultural imperialism, since they do not have the economic or cultural power to resist foreign products and culture.[15]

My discipline, anthropology, has a long tradition of studying cultural appropriation, and celebrating the power of all cultures to take the foreign and make it local. Ralph Linton's essay, "One Hundred Percent American" reproduced in countless anthropology texts, makes the point that everything that is now considered typically American, from apple pie to pajamas, came from some other place.[16] They became "American" by domesticating and incorporating them into daily rituals and cultural practices. More recently, James Watson's collection *Golden Arches East* demonstrates how McDonald's has been changed and transformed as it has been appropriated by consumers in east Asia. While Korean and Taiwanese culture have been changed by the arrival of McDonald's, they have also changed McDonald's in ways that make it more appropriate and local.[17] This process of local adaptation of global consumer goods has been labeled "glocalization" by Ritzer and others.

The reassuring tone of these studies is built on the comforting notion that local cultures are never going to disappear, that any group has the power to transform intrusive goods and institutions by relabeling, repackaging, renaming, decommodifying and other practices that localize and domesticate foreign invaders. People, they say, are capable of taking what they want from the global consumer culture, and instead of being brainwashed, modern consumers are skeptical and selective.[18] It is hard to reconcile this view of consumer culture with the alarms and warnings of those who tell us that modern consumer culture is killing us and our planet, and that we are willing victims who are "consuming ourselves to death."[19]

The Caribbean at the Vanguard of Globalization

What if none of these ideas about the globalization of culture is right? Each one is founded on the notion that globalization is something relatively new, that what we are witnessing and trying to describe is the cutting edge of a process that is underway at this very moment. They imply that up until very recently, the world was composed of relatively isolated islands of authentic local culture, threatened by an onrushing wall of multinational corporations, fast food, high technology, tourism and credit cards. History should give us pause before we accept this kind of millennial logic.

A growing literature on the history of consumer society now makes it clear that mass consumption has been "global" for hundreds of years. The invention of steamships, railroads, telegraphs and telephones engendered an industry of pundits ready to tell the public that the world was becoming a global village, connected together with unprecedented speed. Just as we are now told that the Internet changes everything, so our ancestors were warned that the speed of travel on steam-powered railroads was bringing every part of the world closer together and transforming people's consciousness of space and time.[20] You can even find figures on international trade and finance which show that in some ways the world economy is *less* global today than it was 100 years ago.[21]

Anyone questioning the time depth of global interconnections should take a close look at recent archeological and historical evidence, which shows constant long-distance movements of ideas, objects, languages and people during at least the last 5,000 years. Periods of isolation and stability are the exception rather than the rule, and they require just as much explanation as periods of change. Rather than being a natural state, long-term cultural stability must be seen as something rare that requires constant effort. The small, isolated traditional cultures that many of us cherish in our imaginations are not the norm. To their sorrow, and sometimes embarrassment, over the last twenty-five years anthropologists have admitted that many of the timeless traditional cultures they used to write about were not so

Figure 1.1 Map of the Caribbean region, showing Belize on the mainland. Source: Central Intelligence Agency, 1998, Washington DC.

isolated after all. In fact some of the most "traditional" looking places had hundreds of years of history of contact and commerce with great empires and colonial governments.[22]

The implication of this discovery for our understanding of globalization and culture is profound. It suggests that there may not be a basic incompatibility between being *global* and being *local*. In the past, even when conquered, colonized, forcibly resettled, taken as slaves and caught up in terrible epidemics and invasions, people have found ways to create and maintain distinctive local cultures, their languages, traditions and customs. They have found ways to raise children who want to carry on a cultural tradition, instead of giving it up to try to blend into a foreign and more powerful culture. Of course at the same time we know of

hundreds of cultures that have been totally destroyed and crushed and which have disappeared entirely in a process some anthropologists call *ethnocide*. Think of the hundreds of Native North American groups who are known only from scattered historical records and through archeology, while their languages and customs are gone forever. Why do some persist and even flourish, while others disappear? If we have any concern for the maintenance of cultural diversity today, we really need to know what has enabled some cultures to survive earlier waves of globalization.

The Caribbean is a particularly important place to study the relationship between globalization and local culture. Within 150 years of Columbus' discovery of the area, most native cultures had been swept away, and the population was replaced with a polyglot mixture of people from Europe and Africa, many torn by force from their own local traditions. European armies and navies fought constantly for political influence and territorial control, and the area was swept by waves of economic development and depression, migration and conquest. Some islands changed hands between European countries four or five times. Anthropologist Daniel Miller has even argued that the Caribbean should be seen as the first truly modern and global part of the world.[23]

A Radical Proposition

If globalization indeed crushes local culture, there should be nothing of the kind left in the region. Yet anyone who has visited the Caribbean can tell you that there are indeed vibrant and quite unique cultures and cuisines there, so we know that it is possible for local cultures to survive and even flourish after more than 500 years of global pressure. But this forces us to ask more fundamental and difficult questions: does local culture persist *despite* globalization, like a nail that will not be hammered down? Is Caribbean culture, as many have argued, the product of fierce resistance to colonization and oppression, built on the foundation of African culture that survived transportation and slavery? Or could it be that there is something about globalization itself that *produces* local culture, and promotes the constant formation of new forms of local identity, dress, cuisine, music, dance and language? Maybe the very diversity we have always presumed was a remnant of a time *before* globalization is not a survival, but a contemporary of the sweeping forces that have brought modern capitalism to every part of the planet? We have been so convinced that colonization and globalization are forces of homogenization and the domination of local cultures by modernizing and globalizing Euro-American culture that it takes a real effort to switch gears and consider this possibility.

Framing the question in this way begs for a better definition of globalization. Some people focus on globalization as an economic process of trade and flows of money and capital, while others define globalization as movements of information

and technology, or of people through migration and tourism, and some as the growth of political organizations and institutions of law. From a historical perspective, it is clear that globalization has changed dramatically through time, and its manifestations have never been uniform across the planet. British colonialism was one form of globalization, and the American experiment with empire in places like Puerto Rico and the Philippines was very different. So we should not think of globalization in the singular, but in the plural, and we should try to define different periods and kinds of globalization. Furthermore the relationship between the local and the global may be very different in each period; from the very beginning of Caribbean history, the two were like dance partners who could not be separated. Also like dance, Caribbean history has a rhythm that repeats over and over, as local and global move around each other and alternatively take center stage.

There is of course much about the Caribbean that is historically unique, but my goal here is to show that the Caribbean is also like every other part of the world – simultaneously local, distinct and individual, and typical, global and anonymous. The world we live in makes us all at the same time unique individuals and anonymously typical members of a class and a mass culture. That is exactly the paradox that lies at the heart of localization and globalization. One can approach a Caribbean village to tell a story about the persistence of the local in the global world, or at the same time, and equally accurately, to show how every single tiny town in the world is facing the same kinds of commercial, cultural, and social pressures. I want to go beyond conventional ways of framing the issue, to show how both stories have come from the same source.

Why Start in Belize?

Any study of the relationship between the local and the global has to deal constantly with issues of *scale*. We are used to thinking of the world as a neatly ordered set of levels that fit together like nested boxes, or a Russian *matryoshka* doll. Each individual lives within a family, groups of families in a community, communities in ethnic groups or provinces, which are in turn contained by states in regions. The way North American social sciences are organized reflects this kind of model: so psychology starts with the individual, sociology with families and communities, anthropology with ethnic or cultural groups, and political science with the nation state. This is one reason why globalization is such a slippery subject – it cannot be studied at one level, but must include all the levels at once, looking at the *interconnections*, not the *units*.

One way to study interconnections that has proven useful is to follow objects and money instead of people. One of my favorite examples is Tom Miller's *The Panama Hat Trail*, which starts with a straw hat in a store in southern California and follows it through all the people who had a hand in making it, right back to the

marsh in Ecuador where poor farmers gather the reeds that form the raw material for the hat. More recently, Deborah Barndt has traced the life of the average North American grocery store tomato, and there is even a popular TV show on the Food Network called *Follow that Food*.[24] But imagine doing this for even a fraction of the 30,000 products in the average supermarket! Adding a historical dimension makes the project even more formidable.

Instead of starting with a tomato and following its travels, in this book I will start with a place and look at the way globalization has connected it economically and culturally with other parts of the world, over more than three centuries and through four distinct periods of globalization. I can't pretend that I chose Belize specifically for this study, but it is the tiny part of the world that I know best, having worked there on and off for more than thirty years as an archeologist, a cultural anthropologist, a consultant on development projects and a contract employee of the United States Agency for International Development.

To be honest, Belize initially attracted me not because it was typical of anything, but because it seemed such an unusual place – an English-speaking country in the middle of Central America, a mélange of multiple ethnic groups who somehow peacefully coexist. But as I have learned more about Belize, I have found that underneath a unique local flavor and unusual history, it is connected to the world in exactly the same ways as all the other Latin American and Caribbean countries that surround it. Belize is therefore a perfect place to see the contradictions of globalization, to study the general and widespread processes that *produce* uniqueness. Even within the country, we can see the same paradox, since Belizean ethnic groups and subcultures always seem to be completely distinct and unique, while at the same time they are always connected to each other and thoroughly mixed. Somehow the traffic between groups, just like the constant globalizing traffic between countries, does not eliminate or destroy the boundaries and borders that keep the cultures apart and maintain their unique character. Distinction and commonality revolve around one another.

Though most people today see Belize as a backwater (if they see it at all), the country has never been isolated or cut off from the world during 300 years of constant immigration and population movement, with an economy based almost entirely on imports and exports. It is both completely global and thoroughly local at the same time – caught in the paradox of a place simultaneously distant and close, and completely traditional and totally modern. In this, Belize is a microcosm of all the ways globalization has worked for the last 350 years.

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Globalization through Food

The author who comes along to write a book that makes things more complicated, who refuses to tell a story with a clear moral at the end, is in peril of finding no audience. Social scientists and historians in academia are not usually comfortable in a world of moral truths, biblical parables and black and white positions. We always want to tell a much more intricate and ambiguous tale. Too often we are the fusty old professor who shows up at a party to tell everyone that there is no reason to celebrate, or at the funeral to say that things are really not so bad.

Maybe some professors enjoy being the spoilsport, always saying you cannot make judgments because you don't understand the true depth and complexity of a problem. More often, I think, we spend so many years becoming specialists and speaking only to other specialists that we lose sight of the really important and basic issues that started us off in the first place. Some of us are lucky enough to have students who ask sharp questions that bring us up short and force us back to basic and difficult issues. And others work with government officials and policy makers in settings that force them to take a stand, make judgments and take action.

But sometimes there are very good reasons to attack and subvert categories and ideas that force things into simple oppositions. Part of this book takes up this very task. I will argue that the polarity of "local vs global" is simply not up to the job of describing or explaining what is going on with the food systems of the world. There is no way to fit history into a simple evolutionary story from the simple to the complex. We have not moved in a long trajectory from a world of simple self-sufficient farmers to a global food system where all food is industrialized and nobody grows what they eat, or eats what they grow. The real course of events zigs and zags. Globalization appears in different forms in different places in each period of time.

The story I will tell in this book has its villains, tragedies, comedies and even some unsung and largely anonymous heroes and heroines. But if you are looking for a simple condemnation of globalization and a call for the return to a simpler world where everyone lives in pastoral harmony, you have probably picked up the wrong thing to read. By the same token, this is not an ode to the joys and benefits of the world's industrial food system, which is churning out some abominable foods and causing much injustice. Instead I take a historical approach that shows

how the world's industrial food system developed through a series of stages, largely without any design, by people who were improvising rather than planning. Every stage of the development of globalized and industrialized food has brought a diverse set of costs and benefits, paid and enjoyed unequally by different groups of people. And instead of following from altruism or greed, much of the impact has been totally unintended, unanticipated and inadvertent. It is the very nature of the global food system that people who seem to be in control of events are often actually helpless in the face of what is taking place thousands of miles away, and over which they have no control. I find a lot more hapless fools and accidents than evil plotters and successful conspiracies.

So I am afraid that the story I have to tell is indeed complex and about a balance between positives and negatives. Things are worse than you think, but they are also better than you think. Winners can also be losers. More to the point, winners and losers are often linked together in unexpected ways. The same process that produces fast food in one place leads others to think about slow food, farmers' markets and organic farming. Globalization creates a world where causes are remote from effects, and the connections between them are often hidden or obscure. The point of this book is to make some of those connections clearer, to explain how globalization in each period has linked distant groups of people together through the medium of food. The causes for alarm are not in the most obvious places.

I will argue that one danger we face in our food system, perhaps more fundamental than obesity, or the power of giant agribusiness companies, is the way the meaning of food and the satisfactions it offers have become *unhinged* from the economic system that produces food and brings it to our table.[1] This disconnection gives people some freedom of expression and opens up new forms of creativity and scope for ethnic, local and national foods and cuisines. But this freedom comes at a price, and this price is paid unequally by the winners and losers in the global economy.

Food as a Way of Understanding Globalization

Food is an ideal topic through which to understand the history of globalization because it literally connects our bodies to the world, bridging every scale of analysis. Food connects politics to health, mega-corporations to the kitchen table, and our everyday imaginations, wants and hungers to a whole sweep of time and history. Because food is both a physical substance and a vehicle for the imagination, something that nourishes the body, but also fascinates and moves the mind, it plays a protean role in the world, connecting the economic and the symbolic in ever-shifting ways. It is the perfect channel for paradox, because it is always transformed and processed in substance and meaning on its way from raw material to cooked

meals. In the right hands, anonymous profane wheat can become a holy sacrament. Similarly, food produced lovingly through hard labor in a home kitchen can enter the market and end up as one more trendy fashion food for yuppies, or for sale in a plastic national pavilion in Disneyworld. Imported foods can look local, and local foods completely foreign. Authentic-looking local farmers' markets can be populated by retired urban executives running gourmet cheese operations, selling to the middle-class children of parents who ran away from the family farm. The emergence of new kinds of local, ethnic and national cooking can take place among emigrants and exiles in faraway countries, or through the hijacking of culture by the tourist industry.

Most deceptive of all, the transformation of food production and consumption in places like Belize always appears to be something new and unprecedented. The present seems to be a unique moment in the emergence of Belize onto the global stage. But as I will show, this moment has been happening for hundreds of years. During its entire history, Belize has both imported and exported food. Tracing these exchanges reveals the depth of interconnections between tiny places like Belize and an international web of other players. The "commodity chains" of Belizean food and drink connect distant points as far apart as Maine, Madras and Madeira.

These global connections have never been stable, as the booms and busts of global economies affect Belize at every turn. Major world wars and even minor changes in fashion in faraway places have had a direct effect on what Belizeans produce and eat. The specific path that Belize has taken through these obstacles is intricate and complex. But through every period, the unchanging fact of Belize's poverty and marginality has remained.

Food is of such essential economic importance that it has always drawn attention from those who rule Belize. For this reason, even during long periods of history where little was recorded about dress, music, furnishings or other kinds of consumption, there is always some evidence of what people were eating. As I will explain below, the British colonial rulers were constantly worrying over the problem of food production, and they developed "folk theories" explaining why Belize could not feed itself. This led to a constant parade of agricultural missions and specialists, commissions and studies, which provide a rich source of information on food consumption (if not always cooking and cuisine).

Food also attracts attention because it is so often linked directly to issues of ethnic and national identity.[2] This is an old theme in anthropology, and, as I will show, it was also a concern for colonial administrators who wanted to "keep order." Often that meant establishing ethnic categories, and then deciding which were the traditional and customary foods for each group. People sometimes use food to separate *themselves* into ethnic or national or religious communities, drawing borders and boundaries. But in colonies food was a way to slot people into ethnic and

racial categories, and these categories did not necessarily have anything to do with the ones people used themselves.[3] So, for example, in Belize the British lumped Kekchi, Mopan and Yucatec people together as "Indians" who ate corn and black beans, even though they spoke different languages, lived in different kinds of houses and had different cuisines.

Food is also the stuff of international politics, and the power of one country to control the daily bread of another has always been politically important. Today this issue is glossed under the bland term "food security." The authors of *The Wheat Trap*, however, see politics at work in telling the story of how Nigeria changed in a few years from a major exporter of rice to a massive importer of wheat, dependent on world markets for staple food.[4] The book shows how this shift involved money from the oil boom, foreign countries with cheap grain to export, local political and commercial interests seeking short-term gain and a change in people's tastes and desires promoted by advertising and ideas about health. Today Nigeria spends huge amounts of money importing food, while its own farmers fall further into poverty and unemployment, fleeing to the cities in overwhelming numbers. This story is being repeated in other places around the world. As I will show in Chapter 6, farmers, consumers and housewives are often blamed, though they really have little freedom of action given the conditions of international trade and the farm policies in rich countries.

This is why we need to understand a history of large-scale food trading, which began in Roman times.[5] Sidney Mintz, for example, links sugar production in the Caribbean to sugar consumption in metropolitan Europe. He shows how food provides the link between the misery of millions of plantation slaves and the development of a sweet tooth, first among European aristocracy, and then as sugar became cheaper, among the middle classes, and eventually it was the major energy source to keep factory workers' eyes open during their long shifts.[6]

One of the most interesting things about sugar is its anonymity. Few people today have any idea where the white stuff that goes in their coffee was grown. A major point of Mintz's study is this *lack* of connection between producers and consumers in the global food system. But once sugar appeared in Europe, it was swiftly integrated into local culture, given its own meanings and folklore, becoming part of traditional recipes, and eventually becoming so local that nations and provinces are known by the kinds of sweets they prefer.[7] Sugar is therefore an anonymous commodity, which appears on the shelf as if by magic, a quality of the "commodity fetishism" discussed by Karl Marx.[8]

In this book I will focus instead on the kinds of foods where origins *do matter*. In Belize, as in many other places, the origins of food give them basic symbolic meaning and marketplace value. I learned this lesson on a shopping trip to the first supermarket in Belize's tiny capital city, Belmopan. My neighbor stopped me as I took down a box of Kellogg's cornflakes, and showed me that the box I picked was

made (by Kellogg's) in Mexico. She pointed to an almost-identical box, which cost more than twice as much and said that it was the "real, made in USA cornflakes." Though I could taste no difference (except that the Mexican product seemed fresher) my friend assured me that no Belizean with money would be fooled into taking the inferior Mexican product. I found the same thing with a whole series of goods, from washing machines to Christmas turkey. I watched people buy Dole canned pineapple from Hawaii, instead of the fresh pineapples piled up on the street corner. Whatever the objective physical qualities of a food, its *origins* are a central part of its value. People in Belize *want* to know where things come from. As we shall see in later chapters, this is a fundamental difference between the flow of food northward to rich countries, and the flow of food southward.

The Japanese anthropologist Takami Kuwayama says "People on the mainland can go through their lives oblivious to what happens on remote islands, but the opposite is hardly true."[9] The average North American consumer never has to think of where their grapes, tomatoes or cornflakes come from, but at the other end of the scale of global power, things look very different. This is partly a matter of being poorer and wanting to spend money more carefully – you want to know the quality of what you are buying. But more importantly, knowledge about the world of goods is what separates the ignorant backwoods "bushy" Belizean from the sophisticated and knowledgeable consumer. Knowing about foreign goods, how to consume and buy them, was one of the ways that colonial elites maintained their cultural power; they were sophisticated citizens of the world of global goods. Today this same knowledge about the rich metropolitan countries continues to be an important element of social status in Belize, as in many other parts of the world.[10]

Sidney Mintz follows a long tradition in studying economic history, concentrating on the developing world as the producer of raw materials which are then consumed in metropolitan centers.[11] In contrast, here I will concentrate on movements in the other direction, and I will argue that the role of consumers in developing countries has been neglected and even obscured by historians. The demand for metropolitan goods in poor parts of the world has played a crucial role in the economic development of the rich countries from very early on. To a large extent explorers and colonial governments saw the cultivation of demand for imported consumer goods as part of their "civilizing mission." Introducing soap, metal tools, pots and pans, matches, wheat flour and sugar was part of the basic indoctrination of peoples into so-called civilization.

The movement in both directions allowed powerful merchants and bankers to collect a *double profit*. Like the "company towns" developed by the mining industry, many colonies had to sell their labor and raw products at controlled *low* prices, and then they had to buy imported goods at controlled *high* prices.[12] Merchants made profits on both transactions, and stimulated the growth of a

worldwide trade in European manufactures and a network of shipping companies, agents, wholesalers and packers trading everything from guns to lard. The traces of this system are all over the modern world economy, even in this electronic age. So the problems of food security and dependence on world food markets is hardly new, at least for some parts of the world.

My First Taste of Belize

I ate my first meal in Belize in 1973. It was my second year of college, and I had signed on for several months working on an archeological project sponsored by the British Museum. The leader of the project wrote from England and told me to meet the team at the Fort George Hotel in Belize City in what was then called British Honduras. He neglected to send me the next letter telling me that his departure had been delayed, so I ended up spending a very anxious first week. The Fort George was by far the fanciest and most expensive hotel in the country, and I was rapidly running out of money.

The first afternoon, still flush with cash, I decided to have lunch in the hotel restaurant, one of the few air-conditioned places in the country. Eager to try the local delicacies, I was disappointed to see that the menu was mostly sandwiches, burgers or fish and chips. Chewing a sandwich made from canned ham on white bread, I realized that I was surrounded by tourists and British expatriates, who had obviously come to the Fort George to eat familiar European fare. I would have to venture out into town for something else.

The woman at the hotel desk was simply bewildered when I asked if there was a place I could go to eat Belizean food. The words "Belizean food" simply did not compute; they were not part of her vocabulary. She laughed nervously and told me that there were a few places where local people ate, but they were not in safe parts of town. The only *restaurants*, she assured me, were Chinese, or Mom's Triangle Café, which was run by an American woman.[13] I found my way to Mom's, but the only Belizean dish on the menu was called "rice and beans," hardly exotic fare. Wandering around town looking for a real Belizean meal, I could find nothing besides mediocre hamburgers and endless plates of mixed rice and beans, always served with stewed meat, two strips of fried plantain and a potato salad that could have come from any American summer picnic.

Later, working in the northern part of the country, I found the same thing: Chinese restaurants or rice and beans. The workers who helped us dig our excavations and trenches were Spanish-speakers whose ancestors had migrated from Mexico, and their food was pretty much the same as that eaten across the border where they came from. You could sometimes find tasty homemade tamales at gas stations and bars, and you could get barbecued chicken at dances, horse races, football games and other festivities, but otherwise Belizean food, if it existed at all,

was invisible.

When I finally managed to get an invitation to eat at a Belizean home, I jumped at the chance, thinking I would finally get to taste real local food. Instead, as an honored guest, I was served the best thing the family could afford – canned corned beef and stale white bread imported from Mexico, washed down with a lukewarm 7–up. The things Belizeans normally ate had such low status they could not be served to a visitor, and they never appeared on a restaurant menu. When I asked about their regular diet, people were embarrassed and evasive. It didn't help that I was mostly in the company of Belizean men, and I rarely got to talk to a woman or visit kitchens.

So my search for real Belizean food began in 1973, and it has taken me in and out of kitchens, archives, offices and factories ever since. During that time the country changed its name to Belize and in 1981 achieved Independence. The population has doubled, and a sleepy backwater has become a modern tourist mecca, complete with satellite TV, cell phones, Internet cafés and supermarkets. Through those years I have returned to live and work in Belize many times, and have seen the country transformed.

In 1984 when I was working in the US Embassy, I may even have had a hand in changing Belizean food habits myself. I had to spend a month living in a hotel, waiting for my prefabricated house to arrive from the USA by boat (this is a story in itself). The hotel had a Chinese restaurant, where I ate breakfast every morning. In Belize at the time you could only get instant coffee. You were given a cup of hot water, a spoon and a jar of Nescafé (if you were lucky – otherwise you got a bitter Mexican powder).

Belizeans had mostly given up old-fashioned brewed coffee for the modern, convenient and imported goodness of Nescafé. Having lived in rural areas where some people could not afford instant, and still grew their own coffee, I knew it was possible to find the real thing. But actually getting the beans was not easy. In order to buy local food in most of Belize, you have to know the right person, and you have to be patient; there is no rushing the process. For example, at that time, before there were shrimp farms, you could not buy shrimp in any store. But I knew someone who knew someone with a net and once or twice a month he would show up at night to sell me ten pounds, still wiggling, from the trunk of his taxi for a dollar a pound. If I wanted armadillo meat, or freshwater turtle, salted catfish, green-corn tortillas or coral crabs, I had to "engage" them well in advance with someone I knew, and then show up at an appointed time, when it might be there (or not). There were other delicacies for which you had to visit a farm, or find someone to take you to the bush: fruits that you never saw in the market, wild greens, fresh spices, palm hearts, sprouted coconuts or wild mushrooms.

Fortunately I knew an old couple in their seventies in a tiny village two hours west of Belize City, next to the Guatemalan border, who had coffee trees. I drove

out to ask them to pick, roast and grind some beans for me, and two weeks later they had a couple of pounds ready. In the back of a dusty Chinese hardware store I found an old percolator. Finally, one morning I entered the kitchen at breakfast to introduce the thoroughly urban staff to the mystery of brewed coffee. They literally did not know that there was another form of coffee besides instant, and had no idea that it grew on trees in their own country. They wanted to mix the ground beans with hot water. But finally we got things sorted out and I savored the first cup of fresh brewed java ever served at the Chateau Caribbean Hotel.

For a week or so I was the envy of all the other expatriates, pouring the fragrant brew from the percolator on its little china plate. But then the manager caught on to a good thing; she sent her son to buy a commercial coffee maker in Miami, imported some Guatemalan beans and became the first restaurant in town to offer tourists fresh brewed coffee with breakfast. Slowly the other restaurants realized they had to compete, and today you can even find espresso and latte. Today a coffee plantation sells expensive Belizean ground coffee to the tourists. Only a few humble eateries still serve the Nescafé which many local people still prefer.

Experiences like this kept raising the question of why Belizeans seemed to value imported and processed food instead of the local delicacies that I wanted to try. My Belizean friends thought it strange that this rich foreigner was interested in *eating bush* (country food) when he could surely afford "better." Many Belizean products, in the mid 1980s, were still something of a joke. Travelers would bring home Mexican matches so they wouldn't have to use the local brand, Toucan, and everyone joked about their poor quality, saying "If one can't, two can (toucan?)." At the time, though, I was working on projects aimed at improving roads, health and agriculture, and I had no time to pursue the question.

In 1989 my wife, Anne Pyburn, and I had Fulbright fellowships to work in Belize. Anne, an archeologist, was excavating a site on the northern border of Belize. We had just had a daughter, and both of our fieldwork schedules revolved around the needs of the baby. For the first eight months we lived in Belmopan, which has a small Creole middle-class community. I spent my time studying historical statistics on trade in the Belize Archives, got surveys underway in high schools in Belmopan and Belize City, interviewed public servants and prominent citizens and spent time in people's homes talking about food and shopping. I traveled often to Belize City, an hour's drive to the east, where I went on shopping trips with people, recording their comments as they made choices. I interviewed the managers of supermarkets and produce vendors in the markets and did price surveys in shops, comparing local products with imported competitors.

During the September Independence festivities I mingled with the crowds, taking photos and talking with people about the elaborate imported fashions that were on display, especially among the returned "Belizean-American" emigrants home for the party. The following month I attended political rallies, street fairs and

events leading up to the national elections, listening for comments about national identity, nationalism, and policies toward imports and consumption.

At Christmas, Belize is awash with imported clothes, toys, foods and liquor.[14] Moving through shops and streets, I interviewed shopkeepers, sometimes on videotape, about the kinds of things people wanted that year. Then in the spring I went to all three days of the national agricultural show, the only annual event that brought people from all over the country. It was also the only venue where local food and products were given attention.

Then we moved to Orange Walk, a mostly Hispanic town in the north of the country, halfway between the area where my wife was conducting an archeological field school, and the Creole village of Crooked Tree, where I worked for the next four months. I hired Melissa Johnson, then a graduate student at the University of Michigan, to live there and conduct a door-to-door survey. Melissa and I did a variety of other projects and surveys in Crooked Tree, often with Dacia Crawford, a resident then in her last year at Belize Teachers' College. I spent hours with some of the older people in the village, collecting oral history about "before times."[15]

For the last two months of fieldwork we moved back to Belmopan. Commuting to Belize City, I finished a door-to-door survey with help from two Belizean assistants. I also finished an interview-based study of food consumption and recipes among rural and urban Creoles. Most of this fieldwork was done by Inez Sanchez, a retired chief education officer, well-known in Belize as a tireless promoter of local food.[16]

In 1990 the tourist industry in Belize was just growing into prominence, and all over the country people were trying to learn what tourists wanted. So it was an ideal time to study food in Belize. Belizean migrants to the United States were coming home in substantial numbers, looking for business opportunities. An influx of new immigrants from war-torn Central American countries, along with the dramatic arrival of satellite and cable TV in most parts of the country, was shaking Belize, and making everyone think about their culture.[17] The national elections brought out a lot of these tensions, along with lingering fears about the imminent departure of the British Army, which had been protecting the western boundary of the country from the threat of a Guatemalan invasion. The idea of *Belizean culture* was on many people's minds, and the notion that there might after all be something called *real Belizean food* no longer caused nervous laughter. Instead people were self-conscious about their national identity, and some were thinking about how food was a part of it.

This was all brought home to me when our neighbors in Belmopan invited us over for a meal a few weeks before we left the country. The Lambeys were a couple in their early thirties, both of mixed Creole and Hispanic families, and both were mid-level government employees. They knew we were anthropologists, and they wanted to show us that they were proud of their culture, so when Mike Lambey

invited us over he said "I want you to taste some good local food." That they were inviting us for dinner was itself unusual. The traditional large meal of the day in Belize was lunch, and the evening meal or "tea" was usually a light and informal affair. But in 1990, many younger Belizeans, especially working couples, had shifted to what was seen as an American practice of eating a light lunch and the main family meal in the evening.

When Anne and I arrived, we were seated in front of the TV, handed large glasses of rum and coke (made with Belizean rum) and were shown a videotape about the refugee situation in Belize. Then we sat down to a formal set table; all the food was laid out on platters and then passed from hand to hand, instead of being served out on plates in the kitchen, a common practice in working-class families.

Everything we ate, both Mike and Lisbeth said, was made in Belize and cooked to Belizean recipes. We had tortillas, stewed beans, stewed chicken, salad with bottled French dressing and an avocado with sliced white cheese. We drank home-made pineapple wine, which Mike learned how to make from his father. Many of the ingredients were actually imported. The beans probably came from the USA, and the lettuce from Mexico. The salad dressing was made by an American company in the UK. Green salad was hardly something typically Belizean in any case. And the cheese and avocado were produced in Belize by recent immigrants, the refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala whose plight was discussed in the TV documentary.

My point is not that the meal was inauthentic. Using imported ingredients is completely "traditional" in Belize, where huge amounts of food have always been imported. What was completely novel about the meal was that the Lambeys were making a self-conscious effort to cook and present Belizean food. Instead of drawing attention to the imported ingredients and hiding the local foods, as in my first Belizean meals in the 1970s, the Lambeys were proud of the local character of the dishes, and in this sense it hardly mattered where the ingredients came from.

This represents a huge change in attitude, which has strengthened and broadened into what can be called "Belizean cuisine" over the years since we dined with the Lambeys. On the other hand, this meal also shows how the country is still caught up in a status hierarchy where foreign ways of doing things – eating an evening meal and serving food at the table – are still considered high class, modern and civilized.

This meal expresses the contemporary problems of Belizean culture in a nutshell. On the one hand, Belizean culture is thriving as never before: the last twenty years have seen an unprecedented outpouring of Belizean music, arts, literature, drama, dance, fashion and food, and a growing respect for local language and the natural beauty of Belize, which many Belizeans now affectionately call "The Jewel."[18] There is also a revival of ethnic pride and identity, and almost every group now has one or more cultural associations, beauty pageants and political activists.

On the other hand, Belize appears to be more and more Americanized every year. Everyone watches American TV and most are avid fans of American sports teams like the Chicago Cubs (see Chapter 8). In a few short years Belizeans have adopted American holidays like Halloween and Valentine's Day, and have started sending Hallmark cards to mark birthdays. The churches are full of American and American-trained preachers, the youth sport the latest American urban black fashions and the country is overrun with American tourists and expatriates who run many businesses. In my surveys I found that almost 80 percent of Belizeans have a close family member living in the USA. We don't know exactly how many Belizeans have migrated, but there are probably more Belizeans living in Los Angeles or Chicago than in any city in Belize.

These two, seemingly opposed aspects of globalization are not in any way unique to Belize. Anthropologists have seen similar things happening all over the planet. In the years after my dinner with the Lambeys I have found myself asking two sets of questions. First, are these two trends really opposed to each other? What if the intensification of local cultural identity, and increased adoption of foreign imported culture are really part of *the same* process, two sides of the same coin? Second, is this something entirely new, or has this cultural contradiction been part of globalization in the past as well? Have other, earlier, "local" cultures also developed in the very same process that brought a prior influx of "modern" influence from rich cultures of Europe and North America?

A Local Global History

Answering these questions requires an unconventional approach that blends history, anthropology and even some economics and agronomy.[19] This book is an experiment in telling a global story from the point of view of one tiny place. In each era Belize has been remade, in the process redefining what is seen as "local" and "global" or foreign. Beginning with the arrival of European pirates in the seventeenth century, I will show how despite all kinds of national, ethnic and class boundaries, cultures and cuisines were constantly mixed together. This requires me to keep shifting the scale of the narrative, from world events to daily meals, from wars to recipes.

As in all historical research, the resolution of the picture depends on the quantity and quality of the sources. I have had the advantage of many years of experience living and eating in Belize, and many conversations with older Belizeans, which has helped me understand more recent history. But further back in time the evidence about food varies a lot in focus and quality. Most writers concentrated on how the buccaneers looted and plundered, not on how they dined. Most of the few surviving documents from early Belize, right up through the middle of the nineteenth century, are concerned with diplomacy, territorial disputes, land and law

enforcement. Food was often so much taken for granted that it hardly deserved mention. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, the dependence of Belize on imported food, and particularly the price of that food, was often in the public eye. Newspapers and travelers' accounts in this period often mention food. But there were still many aspects of cooking that remained hidden. We know much more about the rich than about the poor, and more about colonial dining than cooking, because the kitchens were managed by servants who were invisible to the diners. We know much more about the city than about the countryside, since travelers usually carried their own rations instead of eating rural food.

Because of these limits on available information, the chapters that follow are not in a systematic chronological order; instead they describe different stages or types of globalization, moving at an uneven pace from past to present. In the next chapter I portray the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century conflict between the indigenous Mayan inhabitants of the area, their Spanish conquerors and the burgeoning coastal culture of buccaneers and pirates who were part of the "Atlantic world" of commerce. During this time of *pirate globalization* the first European settlers of what was called "The Bay" explored and exploited fish and game in the streams and forests. But they ordered and used tropical nature's bounty using a completely European cultural understanding. The result was something uniquely local, but completely European at the same time.

Chapter 4 is about eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century *slave globalization*, when Belize was part of a huge global system that extracted and produced raw materials through forced labor. Feeding the slaves was a central problem everywhere, which was solved in a number of ways, most of which were tried in Belize. Slaves born in Africa brought their own diverse foodways and cuisines, which were adapted to the rations and crops imposed by their owners. Most histories of Caribbean food trace its origins to this period when African and European food collided. I will suggest that the collision was much larger, involving a whole world of commerce.

The next two chapters cover the period of *high colonial globalization*, the mid and late nineteenth century. During this time Belize had a complex society divided up by both race and class, and food became an important way of expressing social distance and difference. At the same time, as discussed in Chapter 6, this was also a period of radical mixing and blending of different cuisines. The rulers of the colonial society tried their best to freeze the categories of class and race, making the everyday blending of cuisines and ingredients in Belizean kitchens truly subversive. Food constantly crossed social boundaries, and almost invisibly, Belizean cooks created a truly creole cuisine that defied the categories of race and class.

The *late colonial globalization* discussed in Chapter 7 includes most of the twentieth century, two World Wars and the Great Depression. Belize became a colonial backwater with a small and depressed economy, dependent on a reluctant

and often irresponsible empire bureaucracy. Food was one of the central issues of colonial politics, as the empire neglected its poorer colonies. Belizeans wanted to maintain their cosmopolitan place in the global economy by continuing to eat British and American branded food. The British administration, on the other hand, wanted Belize to feed itself. This created a basic paradox for the nationalist and independence movements after the Second World War, since resistance to the British colonial regime meant eating imported food. In this political cross fire, Belize could not develop any self-conscious cuisine of its own. This was the situation I met when I first visited Belize in 1973; Belize had a very rich and unique, but entirely hidden, culinary culture.

Chapter 8 brings us up to the current time of *cultural globalization*. Expatriates, Belizean migrants to the United States and the entrepreneurs of a growing tourist industry have cooked up new kinds of Belizean food which nationalists like the Lambeys are proud to serve. At the same time, Belize remains economically and socially dependent, unable to feed itself. This disconnection between Belize's economy and its culture has created both problems and opportunities. There are some hopeful signs that show how the food economy could be reconnected to food and diet, but the Disneyesque culture of tropical tourism could also turn the entire country into an exotic theme park, in which Belizeans are underpaid backstage helpers. This raises the ugly question that I discuss in the concluding chapter: can Belizeans themselves do anything to affect their fate, or is their daily diet determined by institutions like the World Trade Organization and by US foreign policy?

Recipes

Each of the following chapters ends with a recipe. These are more than ornamental, serving two purposes. First, they can convey the flavor of dishes that would otherwise be described in dry prose. None is particularly complicated, and a reader with basic cooking skills should have no problem getting a taste of the foods I am writing about. Second, they are also connected directly to the intellectual purpose of the book; recipes and cookbooks have become the object of a good deal of scholarship because they convey so many kinds of information on ingredients, cooking techniques and assumptions about gender and class.[20] Trying them out in your own kitchen will show you the limitations of the ingredients Belizean cooks had to work with, and how they overcame those limitations through various kinds of processing, mixing and layering.

Most of these recipes are adapted from current cookbooks, or were acquired from friends and informants, and I have tested each one. The recipe for this chapter will make Creole bread, something both subtly Belizean and completely global. This is simple-to-prepare everyday food, but even small differences in the ingredients or methods are detectable by Belizean connoisseurs, who argue over who

makes the best in town. Some say the best buns have to be baked in an old kerosene tin or a cast iron pot on top of a charcoal fire. Belizeans living in Chicago or Calgary say these buns smell of home, and they bring back whole childhoods of memories. When their relatives come to visit from Belize, they bring sacks full.

Recipe: Creole Bread

Makes 5 or 6 buns
1 tablespoon (15 ml) dry yeast
2 tablespoons (30ml) warm water
2 cups (480 ml) all purpose flour
⅔ teaspoon (3 ml) salt
2 tablespoons (30 ml) granulated sugar
1½ tablespoons (25 ml) shortening, lard, margarine or butter
¾ cup (180 ml) coconut milk (fresh or canned)

Mix yeast with a couple of tablespoons (30 ml) of warm water. Mix the flour with the dry ingredients, add shortening, yeast mixture and coconut milk, adjust flour or liquid to make a non-sticky but cohesive dough. Knead for 5–10 minutes. Allow to rise in a warm place for an hour, then punch down. Knead again, form into balls about 2.5 in (6 cm) in diameter, place on greased baking sheet.

Allow to rise for 50 minutes, then bake at 375°F (190°C) for 20 minutes or until golden brown.

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Pirates and Baymen

The first encounters between Europe and the Caribbean were spectacularly destructive to the native people and culture of the islands, and not much better for those on the mainland. Scholarship on the period of initial contact has focused on the *Columbian Exchange* as new plants and animals moved in both directions, transforming the ecology and food production in both the Old and New Worlds. We know a fair amount about the ways that Spanish colonists adapted their diets to new foods, and much less about the reactions of indigenous peoples.[1]

Spanish conquistadors occupied parts of Belize in the first rush of conquest and pillage, and thanks to archeologists and ethnohistorians we know quite a bit about how the lives of the indigenous Mayan people changed as a consequence. This chapter looks instead at a lesser-known but equally important part of the collision between European and Native American worlds. The outlaws of the era, pirates, scavengers, fugitives and thieves presented a different face of European expansionism. They were not interested in conquest and settlement, but in mobility and plunder. In Belize, and other parts of the Caribbean, their polyglot shipboard culture had a more lasting and dramatic impact on history than that of the Spanish. In this chapter I will show how the pirates' direct and utilitarian approach to diet, eating whatever was in their path, and their taste for European luxuries, laid a foundation on which later forms of globalization and localization were built.

Sea-going people were the vanguard of the expanding, and soon-to-be global European economies. Columbus saw his first Caribbean island from the deck of a ship. For the next 350 years, wooden sailing ships were the dominant technology that shaped the region. All commerce was carried in them, all the colonists, servants and slaves arrived in them and they were the main vehicles for the wars and conflicts that decided who owned and controlled each territory. The sailing ship was the most complex machine of its time, with tens of thousands of parts, a self-contained world that could travel without additional fuel or food for months at a time. Building and maintaining one required materials traded over long distances from many different places, a huge establishment of specialized craftspeople, a constant flow of provisions and highly skilled crews.

This costly apparatus almost bankrupted the nations of Europe as they began to build navies in the fifteenth century. But European countries were competing with

each other to trade and extract wealth from the rest of the world, and the sailing ship was the essential tool for the job. Ships carried soldiers to seize territory, mines and slaves, and they preyed on the shipping and settlements of other countries during the almost constant state of warfare in the following centuries. The competition for wealth contributed to a positive feedback cycle, as the increasing flow of goods required more merchant ships and bigger navies, which in turn required greater capital investment, driving more exploration, trading, extractive industry, fighting and colonizing. The expansion of trade transformed the European countries themselves, as new kinds of luxury goods became part of daily life. When people with new wealth tried to climb the social hierarchy, they entered a competitive game of fashion and extravagance which drove demand for even more exotic goods.

Samuel Pepys' diaries from his time working in England's admiralty (1660–1689) document the explosive growth and rationalization of the government's capacity for management and finance. And especially in England, the growth of marine enterprises required a constant supply of men, to build, load and sail ships.[2]

By the sixteenth century, sailors of the Atlantic Ocean had developed a distinct way of life, which shaped the cultures of the Caribbean in many subtle ways. Sailing crews were multiethnic and multinational, with members recruited or "pressed" (kidnapped) from Africa and Asia, as well as most of the countries of northern and southern Europe. Shipboard life had a clear hierarchy of ranks, harsh discipline and poor pay. Working in constant danger that required close cooperation, crews also developed high degrees of mutual trust and solidarity, which was cemented and affirmed by a common dialect, distinct modes of dress, hairdressing and body adornment, and the daily sharing of food and drink in a small group called a *mess*.[3]

The smaller islands were initially similar to ships at anchor. Like ships they were located purely for mercantile purposes: extracting and trading. Like ships they were ruled hierarchically, and each formed a closed society where both social solidarities and differences were exaggerated. Many early colonists of the islands had been sailors, and if not they shared in a common rebellious, egalitarian, often violent masculine culture that could be found among workers in many places all around the margins of the Atlantic Ocean. In the English Caribbean, creole languages grew from the pidgins that developed among multiethnic ships' crews.

This Atlantic world in the 200 years after Columbus was the scene of a capitalist free-for-all, a sloppy scramble for control of native peoples, lands and all the things that could be extracted from land and sea and sold for a profit. Markets had to be found for all kinds of new goods that Europeans had never seen before, and habit-forming "drug foods" like sugar, coffee, cocoa and tea became passions of the rich, and then the everyday luxuries of the middle classes. Tobacco and a huge

array of fermented and distilled alcoholic drinks followed the same pattern. Producing and transporting these products around the world required huge amounts of labor.[4]

In the 1500s and early 1600s there had not yet been a flood of African slaves into the Caribbean basin. Europeans first tried to exploit the indigenes of each area, who died off in droves through disease and incredibly harsh treatment. They tried enslaving Indians from the mainland of Mexico and Central America, which depopulated many coastal areas, but these workers also died from imported diseases. The next solution was to draw on the European poor, who were exported to work plantations of tobacco, indigo and sugar, and for thousands of other kinds of tasks from hauling water to building small boats. Harsh vagrancy and debt laws, the enclosure and consolidation of peasant farms, population growth, religious oppression and political conflict drained Europe's prisons, driving more than 300,000 people from England to the Americas in the seventeenth century, along with 30,000 Irish, 7,000 Scots and thousands from France and other European countries.[5]

In the New World, European servants and indentured workers were forced to labor in much the same horrible conditions faced by slaves. They were often unable to work off their indentures because of debt and legal maneuvers. Huge numbers died from disease, and many fled; along with runaway slaves and sailors these men (and a few women) became the outlaws of their day, and those who stayed in the maritime world came to be called *buccaneers* (also sometimes filibusters, freebooters, corsairs).

Buccaneers sought the margins of settled society, in lawless port towns, distant and lightly inhabited or unclaimed islands and coasts. They hunted and fished for food, meat or hides they could sell, joined navies and privateer ships in search of plunder in times of war, smuggled, robbed and brawled. These people did the dirty work of mercantile capitalism. While investors and governments focused on plantation agriculture, the marginal population were entrepreneurs who explored new territories and resources; they took huge risks, locating and selling products that were widely scattered or hard to find, which could not be exploited by large settled firms.

For example, hunting turtles for meat and valuable tortoiseshell was too risky and expensive for family firms or joint-stock companies. It would have been costly and dangerous to buy and provision hundreds of small boats, and pay men to set turtle nets in likely areas. How could you ever supervise such crews? Instead merchants on the larger islands, and independent ship captains, would wait for the turtle hunters to come to them. The hunters took all the risks, and the merchants made the profits, since they were able to control the market channels.[6] This kind of pressure kept many bands of buccaneers constantly moving outward in search of new wealth they could hunt or steal.

Another of the buccaneers' staple occupations was hunting herds of wild cattle and pigs in remote areas, the progeny of animals released by earlier European visitors. Dampier, who visited buccaneers in Campeche and the Bay of Honduras in 1676, describes them living in camps, where they cooked, ate and slept on raised platforms made of sticks called *barbecues*. After the hunt "When they have kill'd a Beef, they cut it into four quarters and taking out all the Bones, each Man makes a hole in the middle of his Quarter, just big enough for his head to go thro', then puts it on like a Frock, and trudgeth home … '[7] The meat was dried over slow fires on a barbecue, also called by the Arawakan term *boucan*, to produce a hard jerky called *viande boucannée*, which gave the men their collective name. Dried meat and raw hides were valuable items of commerce. Since the ships of the time could only carry provisions for two to three months, ships from Europe had to revictual in the Caribbean for the return voyage. They would pay a high price for foods like boucan and the cassava bread made by the remaining Arawakan natives on Caribbean islands, which would keep for the months required for the trip home.[8]

Buccaneers at the River Balise

We have only a few details about early European activities along the eastern Caribbean shore of the Yucatan peninsula, despite the efforts of historians and archeologists. The first Europeans to see the place were shipwrecked Spanish sailors who washed up near modern-day Cancun in 1511. There may have been a cook among them, but if so he was himself boiled and eaten along with most of his mates.[9] Cortes visited briefly on his way to conquer Mexico eight years later, but serious conquest did not put a Spanish town on the coast until 1545 (Villa de Salamanca de Bacalar, near modern Chetumal on the Mexico–Belize border).

During the following two centuries, Spanish influence waxed and waned, along with sporadic military and religious expeditions and missions. The native population resisted the Spanish, and often rebelled against their rule and drove the priests out. In the early eighteenth century the Spanish deported most remaining Mayan people to Guatemala and Mexico.[10] There was no lasting Spanish presence south of what is now the Mexican border, and most of Belize, then called "Honduras Bay" or simply "The Bay," fell under the sway of buccaneers whose business and cultural connections were with the British Caribbean.

War and disorder in Europe created many opportunities for buccaneers. Without large navies, colonial governors enlisted their crews and ships as privateers – mercenaries whose pay was a share of the loot they could plunder from enemy ships and settlements. But when formal wars ended, the privateers didn't want to stop, and governments began to consider them pirates, a menace to commerce, and started to hunt them down and hang them. The British and French closed their ports to buccaneers toward the end of the seventeenth century.[11] As pillage became

less lucrative and more dangerous, buccaneers looked for other ways to make a living.

In the sixteenth century The Bay was often visited by British and Dutch privateers, explorers and pirates, who attacked the Spanish forts at Bacalar, and Santo

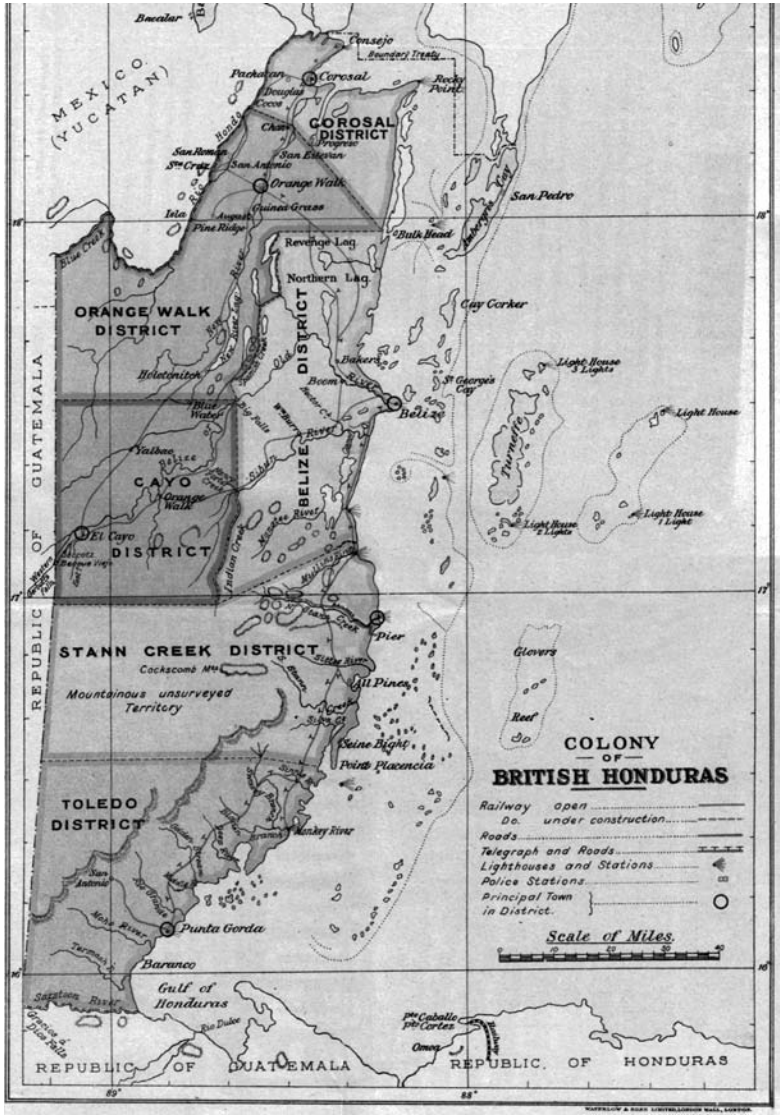


Figure 3.1 A colonial map of Belize from 1909, showing unexplored areas in the interior. Most of the place names are still correct.
Source: collection of the author.

Tomás de Castilla (near modern Puerto Barrios, Guatemala) to the south, and preyed on Spanish shipping, using the many offshore islands (cays) as bases and hiding places. They hunted for food, robbed villages and kidnapped Indians as slaves and concubines, and even once captured a Spanish traveling priest. It was not long before the native people abandoned areas accessible by boat.

Outlaws and buccaneers set up small bases, camps and settlements at convenient sheltered places all along the coast, from Campeche in the Gulf of Mexico, to Cabo Catoche on the northeast tip of Yucatan, at the mouth of the Belize River, on the north coast of Honduras and in the Honduras Bay Islands. Their most famous settlement was on the island of Tortuga off the north coast of the island of Hispaniola (now Haiti), and they took most of their booty to Port Royal in Jamaica, which provided all sorts of entertainment and supplies.

In the early 1640s, Spanish colonists discovered a new source of income. Logwood is a medium-sized thorny tree that grows in freshwater swamps on some Caribbean islands and along the Atlantic coast of Central America – related species are found on both coasts of Mexico and coastal South America. The red heartwood makes a strong long-lasting purple and black dye for wool, cotton, silk and leather.[12] The growth of fashion and the demand for novelty in Europe led to a high demand for colored cloth, which made logwood and other related dyewoods extremely valuable. Just a single cargo was worth a fortune.

We do not know the precise date of the first settlements of logwood cutters around the mouth of what was then called the "Balise" River. Some historians argue for a date as early as 1618, there are stories of a semimythical pirate Wallace building "Fort Alice" in the area in the 1630s, and the famous pirate Coxon may have been marooned there, but there is no firm evidence for permanent settlements of "Baymen" earlier than 1670.[13] Even these were periodically abandoned when the settlers were driven away by Spanish military expeditions.

Cutting logwood was a seasonal occupation; flooding made the swamps impassable in the wet season, but there were other ways to make money. The Baymen also cut fustian, or fustic, another dyewood that came from a rainforest tree, yielding a yellow or khaki coloring. They gathered sarsaparilla, the bark of a forest vine, which was in demand in Europe as a medicine and tonic. There were other worthwhile products like balsa wood, cascarilla bark and resin from copal and pine trees, all used in medicine, and the Baymen formed small crews to hunt turtles along the coast. Green turtles were sent live to Europe, and the carapace of the hawksbill turtle yielded tortoiseshell that was used to inlay furniture, and to make fashionable jewelry, combs and other toilet articles. Exotic cosmetics and medicines had a special appeal in Europe. As Europeans became more and more concerned with the appearance and well-being of their bodies, they sought tropical and exotic remedies and adornments; this in turn transformed the lives of people and environments thousands of miles away.[14]

The Buccaneer Diet

Most emigrants to the economic margins of the New World were men who came from cultures where women did all the cooking. Even in the households of nobility, male chefs had not yet taken over management of the kitchen. The men who left for the New World knew little about preparing meals, though those from farm backgrounds might have known butchering, food preservation and storage. A few may have been brewers or bakers.

If buccaneers learned to cook, it was on board ship or in another institution, and in the Caribbean they suddenly faced a world of unfamiliar ingredients. The globalization of Caribbean food starts with this scenario: a rough, ship's cook used to working with barrels of rations, now marooned on a narrow beach, with colorful tropical fish nibbling his ankles as he peers into a jungle teeming with unknown plants and animals.

Buccaneers' tastes and standards had been formed during their time in the maritime Atlantic world, where the staples were the same ones that sustained European sailors and soldiers wherever they traveled. The officers on naval and merchant vessels enjoyed the luxury of personally stocked larders full of delicacies, live animals carried on board for fresh meat and trained cooks and stewards. But the food of common seamen and lower ranks was a basic preserved daily ration, prepared simply by notoriously uncaring cooks. In 1756 the satirist Edward Ward wrote scathingly of the ship's cook: "His knowledge extends not to half a dozen dishes … The real truth is, any one would guess him to have been a seven year apprentice to the prince of darkness."[15] A preoccupation of the ship's cook was collecting the fat that floated to the top of the vats of boiling meat (called *slush*), which he sold to the men to supplement their diet, and to the ship to lubricate the rigging.

The origins of ship's rations go far back in time, to the earliest standing armies and navies. Drying and salting are ancient modes of food preservation used in antiquity to support work groups far from home who could not produce their own food. Roman soldiers got about two or three pounds of barley or wheat per day, and variable amounts of wine, olive oil, fermented fish paste and spices.[16] In later Europe the ration was based on grain, pulses and preserved meat or fish. When the English Tudor ship, the *Mary Rose*, sank in 1545, it took to the bottom samples of the sailors' daily ration of the time: hard biscuit made from wheat flour, salted meat, peas and hard salted cheese.[17] British naval rations remained remarkably stable through time; Table 3.1 reproduces the weekly diet of the common sailor according to the admiralty regulations of 1756. Beer, oatmeal, butter and cheese were provided only when close to port; on long voyages biscuit and salted meat were served seven days a week, supplemented with peas, and a higher rum ration substituted for beer. The ration was similar on other European ships. The Spanish

drank wine instead of beer, ate more cheese, used olive oil instead of butter and substituted beans or chickpeas for peas. The Danes ate barley, and had their biscuit with salted butter.[18] For condiments British sailors got mustard and vinegar, and later some black pepper, while the Portuguese were known for liberal use of olive oil, garlic and other spices. The food on merchant ships was similar, though it varied widely in quantity and quality.

Table 3.1 Daily proportion of provisions allowed to every person on board his majesty's ships

	Sun.	*Mo.*	*Tu.*	*We.*	*Th.*	*Fr.*	*Sat.*	*Tot. pr. wk.*
Bread, lbs	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7lbs
Beer, galls	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7 galls
Beef, lbs			2				2	4lbs
Pork, lbs	1				1			2lbs
Pease, pts	½			½	½	½		2 pts
Oatmeal, pt		½		½		½		1½ pts
Sugar, oz		2		2		2		6 oz
Butter, oz		2		2		2		6 oz
Cheese, oz		4		4		4		12 oz

Source: William Falconer (1815).

Note: There was also an allowance of vinegar, and lemon juice with sugar was provided when available. When the beer was gone, wine or punch made from spirits was substituted. A mix of flour and beef fat could be substituted for beef one day of the week

A whole infrastructure developed in Europe to produce these rations, growing in size with the scale of naval and land warfare. Early navies bought in public markets or from large landowners. Over time they developed an elaborate (and usually corrupt) system to contract for huge amounts of meat, fish and grain, some of which was moved long distances. This stimulated widespread economic growth and helped turn what had previously been a haphazard system of country and town food markets into a more organized and controlled enterprise. To meet this demand farming became more of a business, where landowners with production contracts took charge of production using hired labor, thus beginning the long process of turning peasants into farm workers and family farms into rationalized "factories in the field."

Armies and navies also stimulated industries that pioneered standardization, mechanization and mass production. The production of hard-tack or ship's biscuits provides a good example. These were made from just wheat flour and water, but they achieved their long storage life through a lengthy and laborious kneading, and long baking at precisely controlled temperatures. Machinery and production lines were developed as early as the late seventeenth century, and by 1800 three British

admiralty bakeries had a daily output of 35,000 kg of standard-sized biscuits packed into regulation wooden barrels or cloth bags.[19]

Once the machinery and infrastructure for providing cheap rations was established, storable food proved useful for many other purposes. It could be used to support any group of specialized workers in places where there was no food market, including commercial hunters, loggers, fishermen, miners, trappers, and extractive enterprises in thousands of places around the world. The gold, wood, furs and other exotic commodities that flowed from this vast web of extractive workers to Europe, were balanced by a counterflow of provisions. This steady market for processed food was lucrative and important in shaping agriculture and trade policies, which in turn sometimes led to the horrible contradictions of starvation amidst an abundance of food in places as distant as Ireland and India. During the lead-up to the 1846–1850 Irish Potato Famine, while millions of Irish people lived in a state of near-starvation, the island was a major exporter of wheat, beef and pork and continued to export food even at the height of the famine as millions died.[20]

The conquest, colonization and exploitation of the Caribbean and Central America was therefore only made possible by a steady supply of European preserved and stored food. Initially this was supplemented by what Europeans could trade or steal from the indigenous people of the area, and through hunting and fishing. In a relatively short time, they also began to plant their own crops and keep domestic animals, but for reasons to be discussed in the next chapters, the Caribbean continued to be dependent on imported food long after mainland areas had become self-sufficient.

Were Buccaneers Farmers?

We know that the buccaneers and pirates who settled the Belize coast ate ship's rations, at least part of the time, and that they were great hunters. Both roles fit with the image of outlaws, privateers and pirates which has been passed along to us by generations of romantic historians and novelists. But the idea of buccaneers *farming* seems altogether too domestic and peaceful. The evidence from Belize shows, however, that even in the very earliest settlements, buccaneers produced some of their own food.

On both the islands and the mainland, buccaneers undoubtedly had close contact with indigenous people. They learned about wild fruits and game, and stole or traded for corn, cassava and other cultivated crops. They enslaved captured Indian women, who were set to cooking, washing and sewing, and the buccaneers may have developed a taste for the dishes these women made.[21] In their continual quest for alcohol, they must also have learned about the various drinks fermented from fruits, grains and tubers by both island and mainland indigenes.

Figure 3.2 "Captain Robert's crew carousing at Old Calabar River." Pirates drinking punch from a bowl, and rum from bottles. Though not a contemporary image, this does express the pirate's love of liquor.
Source: Marine Research Society, 1837.

Dampier says that some of the logwood cutters kept plantain walks (groves) "that no man knows but themselves" as well as plantation or provision grounds, where they probably grew some vegetables, corn and root crops adopted from Mayan people.[22] Governor Thomas Lynch of Jamaica wrote in a 1671 report about the British settlements on the coast that "some of them have affirmed to have planted Indian provisions and have found them well growne, and their houses still standing at their returne, after a voyage to Jamaica, which is usually compassed in a fortnight."[23] This sounds more like real permanent farming than a simple scattering of seeds.

These early farming enterprises attracted very little attention, a pattern that we will see repeated over and over in Belize's history. They may not have been very large, and they probably did not require a great deal of attention. More to the point and as noted above, the image of farming does not settle well with the romantic figure of the buccaneer, something the Baymen themselves may have realized. There is abundant evidence that the buccaneers and pirates had immense pride in

their role as outlaws. They exaggerated their own reputations in bouts of story-telling and lying, and boasted about their exploits while on trial and even from the gallows.[24] Given that they lived in a society that valued rations and imported luxuries over local "native" foods, a mundane patch of plantains, corn and yams was probably beneath mention.

It would have taken little effort to clear forest and cultivate crops where the logwood cutters camped. Plantains are easily propagated from suckers (shoots that emerge at the base of the tree), and once a dense stand is established they require little care, producing thousands of fruits on an almost continuous basis. If hunting was poor, or a shipload of provisions was late, these patches would have saved the Baymen from starvation. When the Baymen began to buy and accumulate slaves, these "provision grounds" became more important. As elsewhere in the Caribbean, slaves probably cultivated several African crops including plantains, okra, taro, pigeon peas, watermelon and yams, and they may have raised chickens or other small livestock. But there was not yet a large enough population for a food market, so farming was mainly for local subsistence.

The British government wanted Belize settlers to become farmers rather than outlaw logwood cutters (a theme we will see repeated for the next 300 years). In 1679, when there were about 700 Baymen, King Charles II of England wrote to Lord Carlisle, then governor of Jamaica, telling him to discourage logwood cutting, and to convince the Baymen to become settled planters.[25] The Spanish were opposed to permanent settlement, maintaining that Belize belonged to them by conquest, and they let the Baymen cut wood with permission. So the treaties of 1763 and 1783 between England and Spain specifically forbade the logwood cutters from building permanent houses and planting crops. The Spanish wanted to maintain their claim to the area by portraying the Baymen as no more than sojourners, cutting wood temporarily without putting down any roots. Presumably they were expected to eat no more than ship's rations, fish and game.[26]

We know that farming was important to the Baymen because they complained so loudly when the Spanish burned their provision grounds during raids. Sailors and buccaneers made a habit of planting crops in places they often visited, so there would be food on their return, or to sustain shipwrecked sailors. Captain Dampier, for example, planted turnips on the island of Juan Fernandez that helped sustain a marooned sailor for four years.[27] But turnips only suited emergencies. To the Baymen the highest ranking food was always meat, which was preferable to any kind of grain or vegetable.

The Importance of Meat

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe, most working people ate very little meat. Even in rural areas, meat was an expensive luxury used more

as flavoring than a main dish. One legacy of feudal times was that wild game and even fish like salmon and sturgeon were the prerogative of nobility. For rural people, trapping and hunting was usually illegal poaching treated as a serious crime, often punished by deporting the offender to the New World as an indentured servant or convict laborer. Meat was inextricably related to class, wealth and power.

It is no wonder, then, that meat had a very special significance for the men who escaped their bondage to become buccaneers, pirates, outlaws and independent woodcutters or fishermen. The Dutchman Alexandre Exquemelin, sold as a servant in 1666, eventually joined a band of buccaneers.

> Before the Pirates go out to sea, they give notice unto everyone that goes upon the voyage, of the day on which they ought precisely to embark, intimating also unto them their obligation of bringing each man in particular so many pounds of powder and bullets as they think necessary for the expedition. Being all come on board, they join together in council, concerning what place they ought first to go unto wherein to get provisions – especially of flesh, seeing they scarce eat anything else. And of this the most common food among them is pork. The next food is tortoises, which they use to salt a little … their allowance, twice a day to every one, is as much as he can eat, without either weight or measure.[28]

Communally gathering food and free distribution reflect the egalitarian ethic of buccaneer society, which was self-consciously opposed to the inequalities of rank and privilege common in Europe, and especially aboard naval ships.[29] Nothing could better express freedom than a diet of unlimited amounts of meat, a food that also had a strong association in European culture with masculinity and power.[30] Meat was considered a healthy "strong" food that built the blood, sustained the body and satisfied hunger unlike anything else.

Meat was such a necessity for seafarers that when stores of salt meat were low, they would catch rats that abounded aboard ship. Often the only reason Buccaneers and sailors came ashore was to hunt, an activity that many clearly enjoyed as sport. Ships carried barrels of salt for preserving whatever meat or fish sailors could hunt, harpoon, catch or steal.

While sailors were not averse to eating such exotic animals as albatrosses, penguins and the noses of elephant seals, they showed a clear preference for familiar European meats like beef, pork and mutton. For this reason they let breeding pairs of domestic animals loose in many places, particularly on islands, so they would reproduce and provide easy hunting at a later date. Along with the rats (and sometimes cats and dogs) they inadvertently introduced, these domestic animals, lacking effective local predators, multiplied to the point where they did irreparable damage to the local ecology. By the time colonists arrived, many local species were, like the Dodo, already becoming extinct through a combination of hunting and habitat destruction.

The accounts of buccaneers and early travelers to Belize give an extensive list of the animals of the country, not as natural history, but as a survival guide that reads like a menu. Each animal is rated according to its edibility and flavor. The animals they held in the highest esteem were those considered *sweet* and *fat*, including some that are still favorites among rural Belizeans, and others that are no longer considered choice.

Dampier praises the coatimundi, a relative of the raccoon, which he calls *squash* (after the Mayan name *quash*): "The Flesh of it is good, sweet, wholesome Meat. We commonly skin and roast it; and then we call it Pig; and I think it eats as well. It feeds on nothing but good Fruit …"

Dampier also praises armadillo ("The flesh is very sweet …"), and a host of birds including doves ("very good Meat"), pigeons ("good Food"), quam ("very good Meat"), currasow ("very good to eat"), cockrecoes ("extraordinary sweet meat"), three kinds of ducks ("all … are very good Meat"), and small curlews ("their Flesh is most esteemed as being the sweetest"), all of which are still sought after by rural people in Belize.[31]

Several animals stand out in these early eating guides. Alligators and crocodiles were generally shunned or considered poor eating. Dampier liked crocodile eggs, but said the meat stank and was only eaten in "case of Necessity." Uring thought "allegators" to be "coarse," and found their eggs inferior to those of turtles and iguanas. [32] These animals were shunned as food because they ate meat and carrion. This aversion persists today in Europe and many other places. Animals that eat other animals, especially dead ones, are considered unclean, so predatory animals like tigers and wolves or eaters of carrion like hyenas and vultures are thought inedible.[33] In contrast, iguanas are closely related to crocodilians but as vegetarians they were considered a delicacy, and European sailors sometimes traveled up the rivers of Belize just to shoot them and hunt for their eggs.[34]

Another animal that stands out, for the opposite reason, is the small forest rodent Belizeans call the gibnut, also known as paca in Spanish (*Agouti paca*). Captain George Henderson, who was stationed in The Bay with his regiment in 1806, says: "The Gibeonite [*sic*] … is a small animal greatly resembling, though somewhat larger than, the guinea-pig. It is plentifully found at Honduras, and easily domesticated. The flesh of it is extolled as a peculiar delicacy."[35] In 1859 Simmonds said its "white and tender flesh … when fat and well dressed, is by no means unpalatable food, but very delicate and digestible."[36] In every account of hunting in Belize, this animal is singled out as the greatest delicacy the forests have to offer. It is a vegetarian, fairly common even close to villages and towns and for most of the year it has more fat than any other forest animal. This fat is probably why it was so highly valued; other small animals like the "bush rabbit" (*Dasyprocta punctata*, also confusingly called *agouti*) or squirrel have similar flesh but much less fat and are less valued.

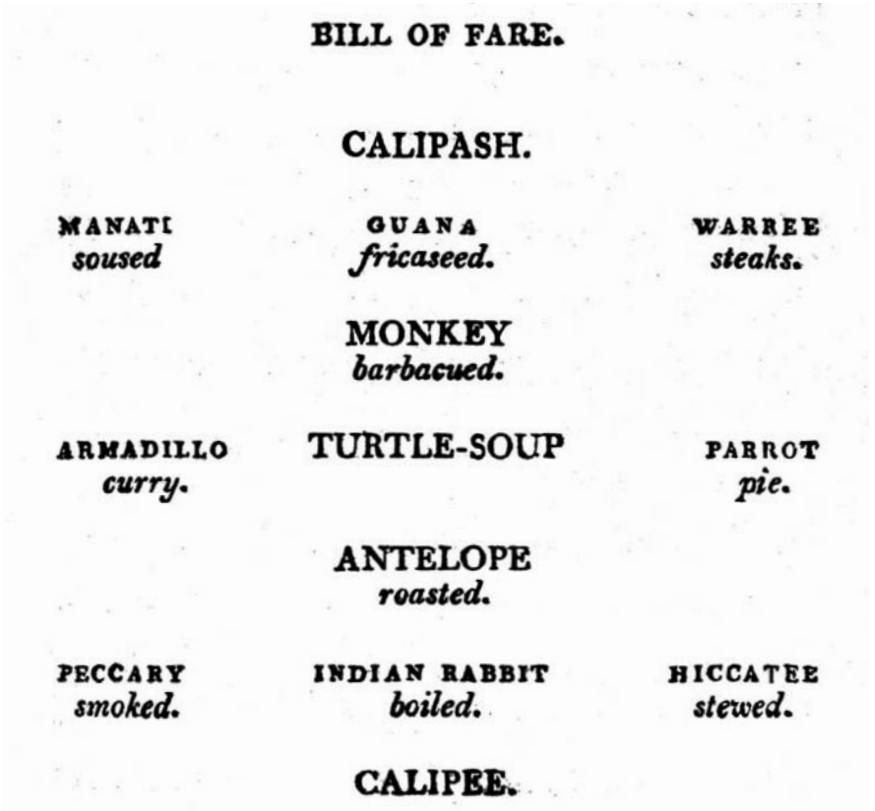
Manatees ("sea cows") were also avidly hunted by sailors and Baymen; they were large, slow and very fat. In the eastern Caribbean, manatees were commercially hunted to supply urban markets until the slowly reproducing animals were wiped out. Exquemelin says, "Their flesh is very good to eat, being very like in colour unto that of a land-cow, but in taste unto that of pork. It contains much fat, or grease, which the Pirates use to melt and keep in earthen pots, to make use thereof instead of oil."[37] Henderson says:

> The flesh of it is particularly admired, and thought equal to the finest veal. The tail, which forms the most valuable part of the Manati, after having laid for some days in a pickle prepared for it with spices, etc. and eaten cold, is a discovery of which Apicus might have been proud, and which the discriminating palate of Heliogabalus would have thought justly entitled to the most distinguished reward. [38]

This kind of cold pickling called "sousing" was a common part of English cookery at the time, and was often applied to tripe, heads and other tough cuts of meat full of cartilage. It is no longer common in Belize, but in other parts of the Caribbean souse is still a popular delicacy, and it survives in the USA in the form of pickled pigs' feet.[39]

By the middle of the nineteenth century, manatees had become very rare but sea turtles, particularly the green sea turtle, persisted in some numbers off the Belize coast. They were always mentioned by travelers and visitors as one of the best local foods. Initially live and salted sea turtle was used as shipboard rations for trips back to Europe after all the salt beef and pork had been used up. Later they were valued locally because of their high status in Europe. In the early 1700s imported tropical turtles, particularly the green turtle from the Caribbean, had become favorite delicacies in Europe. In England they were initially eaten in taverns and dining houses that specialized in turtle – it was an expensive delicacy eaten conspicuously in a social setting as a special event. With steam shipping it became cheaper and more common; about 15,000 a year were imported to England in the 1850s.[40] Gourmets distinguished different varieties of turtle, grading them according to size and condition, developing elaborate recipes and serving methods that separated the various parts of the animal and cooked each one differently.[41] Any educated English diner in the nineteenth century knew the difference between *calipash* and *calipee* (green gelatinous fat on the upper shell, and the softer lower shell with its yellow fat).

In early Belize, all kinds of sea and freshwater turtles were hunted, and only a small proportion of those caught were exported to Europe. Caribbean people relished the flesh of the large hawksbill turtle, for instance, but there was no demand for them in Europe. Some men specialized in catching turtles as a year-round profession, while for others it was a seasonal occupation. Most of the meat was salted and sold to logwood cutters.[42] The most common freshwater turtles now


BILL OF FARE.

CALIPASH.

MANATI
soused

GUANA
fricaseed.

WARREE
steaks.

MONKEY
barbacued.

ARMADILLO
curry.

TURTLE-SOUP

PARROT
pie.

ANTELOPE
roasted.

PECCARY
smoked.

INDIAN RABBIT
boiled.

HICCATEE
stewed.

CALIPEE.

Figure 3.3 "Bill of fare of an entertainment given several years ago by the officers of a detachment of the 3rd Regiment (Buffs) at their station on the Mosquito shore." Warree are close relatives of peccary, both related to the wild pig.
Source: Henderson, 1811.

called *bocatora* and *hicatee* also became favorite foods in Belize; there was even a proposal to export their livers to Europe in the 1850s![43]

A Taste for Fish and Fat

Fish abounded in the Caribbean, but Europeans found them very different from familiar coldwater species, and there was the added danger of fish-poisoning (ciguatera), caused by a toxin in microorganisms that concentrates in the flesh of predatory fish. Everywhere in the world, people rank some fish as delicacies and others as trash, though there is no consistency in these lists from one place to the next. The Baymen chose their favored fish according to two principles based on their European experience: how fat was it? And, does it resemble a familiar fish?

Dampier, for example, favors the tarpon (*Megalops atlanticus*), a large silver fish that he says is just like salmon: "Tis good sweet wholesome Meat, and the Flesh solid and firm. In its Belly you shall find two large Scallops of Fat, weighing two or three Pound each …"[44] Uring singles out the jewfish (*Epinephelus itajara*, a large species of grouper), which "exceeds in goodness; they are shaped something like a Cod, but thicker in Proportion, and much better eating … '[45] Another fish considered a great delicacy throughout the Caribbean was the gray mullet (*Mugil liza*), also *calipeva*, or more popularly the "salmon of the West Indies" or the "tropical trout."[46] Like European mullet it was eaten smoked, salted and fresh, and the roe was compared favorably with sturgeon caviar.

Unfamiliar fish could become more comfortable fare by renaming them after something European. A silvery fish common in upland Belizean rivers (*Agonostomus monticola*) was dubbed "mountain mullet" by British colonists.[47] The principle here is substitution, where a new item is brought into the diet by switching it for something already known. For the colonists, substitution allowed new local items to stand in for more expensive cosmopolitan foods like sturgeon caviar from the Caspian Sea. As I will show later, substitution can also work the other way around, where something cosmopolitan or "global" can replace a similar local item.

Flying fish, snappers and Spanish mackerel are also mentioned by Dampier as being "sweet and fat." They are all white-fleshed rather than dark, and in texture they are more like common northern European fish than fatty openwater fish like tuna and bonito. Nevertheless, I don't want to give the impression that the Baymen were picky eaters. They came from a rough and ready European society that ate everything from swans to sea snails, and when they were hungry they would eat just about anything (even, as accounts of starving sailors show, each other). But still, they had strong preferences and tastes, and they brought with them ideas of "delicacy" that had a consistent set of values. And in the sea, as on the land, they did not like to eat predators and scavengers. None of the early explorers treats shark as a decent food to eat, and they were not enthusiastic about crabs either.[48]

Taste and Cooking

Despite this wealth of exotic and tasty animals, buccaneers and early settlers in The Bay preferred to eat European food. They rejected European society and politics, but they could not break loose from European cuisine and culture, particularly when it came to luxuries, food and drink they consumed entirely for pleasure. We will see that their Belizean descendants, hundreds of years later, *still* look abroad for their delicacies, still want to drink champagne and eat salt beef. How can taste be so incredibly persistent over such a long period of time? Globalization

means not just the extension of conquest or trade over long distances, or the physical movement of people, but also the expansion of cultural connections that go much deeper than beliefs or opinions. European tastes, though less visible and obtrusive than guns or churches, were one of the most important elements of globalization.

Taste is visceral, embedded in bodily experiences from childhood. While people have some control over it and can cultivate new tastes, they are more often subject to being ruled by their preferences and pleasures.[49] In at least the first generation of settlers in the New World, the values acquired earlier survived the violent changes in other aspects of life.[50]

One of the peculiar powers of taste is that people grow accustomed even to things they dislike. Sailors complained constantly about their monotonous shipboard rations of weevily biscuit and "salt horse." But once away from the privation and danger of life at sea, they found themselves longing for it. An early seventeenth-century description of sailors noted sarcastically that "The common Seamen with us, are so besotted of their Beef and Pork, as they had rather adventure on all the Calentures [feverish delirium], and Scarbots [scurvy] in the World than to be weaned from their Customary Diet, or so much as lose the least Bit of it."[51] The Baymen also tried to eat familiar dishes made from ship's stores if they could. They even bartered their precious logwood directly for barrels of flour and meat, and casks of rum. Dampier described the logwood cutters' favorite diet as "Pig and Pork, and pease, or beef and dough-boys."[52]

Shipboard cooking meant boiling. Pieces of salt meat would "steep" in water for a day to remove some of the salt, and were then simmered in a big cauldron for hours. Pease porridge was made by adding dried peas directly to this water, so they absorbed the flavor of the meat. Dough-boys were made on board ship when flour was given in place of biscuit or bread. The flour was mixed with grated salt pork-fat and water to make thick dough. This was wrapped in a cloth, and then boiled along with the chunks of pork. The result was heavy and somewhat gelatinous, the basic model for what the British now call a *suet pudding* or a *boiled pudding*. If the sailors could get a bit of sugar and some raisins or dried fruit to add to the dough, they produced what was called a *plum duff*.[53] Another way to prepare the ration was the sailor's *Lobscouse*, a hash made by chopping up cooked salt meat, pounding the virtually petrified ship's biscuits in a cloth bag into a powder, and then stewing or frying them together, along with potatoes or onions if available.

Another dish the Baymen certainly enjoyed was *salmagundi* (or *sallad-magundy*), a dish reputedly of Scottish maritime origins that was adopted by buccaneers and pirates and became their favorite food. It was a chopped salad that included meat, fresh or salted fish, fresh and pickled vegetables and whatever else was available, seasoned heavily with mustard, oil and vinegar.[54] The heavy spicing

was closely associated with masculinity, virility and a rough way of life. This association of spicy food and masculinity can be traced to medieval ideas about the effects of particular foods on vital bodily fluids (humors), and beliefs about the heating and cooling effects of some foods on men's passions.[55] The very name of the dish entered the language as a generic term for a hodgepodge or unplanned collection of unmatched ingredients. Recipes for it are still found in some cookbooks from Scotland and England.

These starchy and heavy dishes were washed down with liberal amounts of alcohol whenever it was available. Men of this era, and sailors in particular, only drank water as an extreme measure, and they consumed amounts of alcohol that would have qualified all of them as alcoholics today.[56] Coffee and tea were not yet common drinks among the working classes; they were expensive luxuries until well into the eighteenth century. Instead the buccaneers' most common drink was a hot or cold punch made from mixing rum with water, sugar and some kind of flavoring, which went by names like *kill devil* and *bumboo*. *Flip* was the sailor's "darling liquor" according to Ward.[57] The North American colonial version was made from beer, molasses and rum, heated with a hot poker in a tankard. Later British recipes include milk, eggs, nutmeg and rum or brandy, and there were many variations. *Rumfustian* was a more elaborate drink usually enjoyed ashore, which included eggs, beer, wines and spirits. People were not squeamish about raw eggs. Visitors to The Bay mention that their favorite way to eat iguana and turtle eggs was raw with rum and water as a punch.[58]

Drinking was more than sustenance and a way to wash food down. It was the main social recreation, and drinking together, treating each other to rounds in binges that left men insensible on the ground, was the most basic way men bonded with each other. Drinking bouts went along with gambling and other boisterous behavior. A crew was defined by the act of drinking together, and like the famous Bedouin ritual of sharing coffee with strangers, refusing to share was usually taken as an insult. As Dampier said "As long as the liquor lasted, we were treated with it, either in Drams or in Punch."[59]

Alexandre Exquemelin visited The Bay a number of times in the late seventeenth century, and was clearly impressed by the Baymen's binges.

> whenever they have got hold of something they don't keep it for long. They are busy dicing, whoring, and drinking so long as they have anything to spend. Some of them will get through a good two or three thousand pieces of eight in a day – and next day not have a shirt to their back … My own master used to buy a butt of wine and set it in the middle of the street with the barrel-head knocked in, and stand barring the way. Every passer-by had to drink with him, or he'd have shot them dead with a gun he kept handy.[60]

Captain Nathaniel Uring reported of his visit to The Bay in 1719:

> The wood-cutters are generally a rude drunken crew, some of which have been pirates, and most of them sailors; their chief delight is in drinking; and when they broach a quarter cask or hogshead of wine, they seldom stir from it while there is a drop left. It is the same thing when they open a hogshead of bottle ale or cyder, keeping at it sometimes a week together, drinking till they fall asleep; and as soon as they awake, at it again, without stirring off the place … they do most work when they have no strong drink, for while the liquor is moving they don't care to leave it.[61]

This kind of bingeing reflects the rhythm of life in The Bay. Men would spend long periods of time in small crews or gangs out in the swamps, cutting and hauling loads of wood, and building the rafts to carry it down to the coast. These periods of arduous and isolated work were punctuated by the arrival of ships, which brought not only necessary hardware, rations and rum, but also all kinds of luxury goods, news of the outside world and perhaps new settlers, visitors, slaves and women. The opportunity to sell their wood came along with a rare chance to buy new goods. According to Uring, "As soon as they have Notice of any Ship or Vessels' Arrival at the River's Mouth, they flock down on Board in order to purchase such Things as they want …"[62] Sometimes they bartered wood directly for goods, and even when they were paid in cash, the money did not stay in their hands for long.

Men who had been living in hardship for long periods were suddenly flush with funds. Uring says that in 1719 when he visited, the cutters received five pounds per ton, a pittance compared to the price of logwood in Europe, but far more than a workman in England earned in a year. Gambling and conspicuous generosity quickly redistributed wealth among the Baymen, reducing tensions, leveling differences and building a cooperative public spirit that visitors noted well into the nineteenth century. The arrival of ships continued to be a major public event in the colony, a time of excitement and increased consumption, for many years, until regular steam ship service began in the late 1860s.

Masculinity, Rank and Luxury

While taste is visceral and felt through the body, it also has an important social content; we pay a great deal of attention to the tastes of others and have many ways to display our own. Anthropologists of food tell us that eating is one of the essential ways humans create social differences, boundaries and ranks. Dining creates order, and one of the principles that orders every society is gender.[63]

The society of the first Baymen was overwhelmingly masculine; these were rough sailors for whom logwood cutting was a chance to be independent and make

decent money. But they did have women, initially Indian slaves taken from the Atlantic shores of Central America, and then African slaves. We know from Exquemelin and others that these women were forced to cook, sew and do laundry, but we have no details about the rest of their obviously painful lives. Many died from brutal treatment and disease, but others probably formed some kind of domestic arrangement with Baymen as individuals or small groups.

Undoubtedly these women quickly learned what kinds of foods and dishes these men wanted. Just as obviously, they brought with them into slavery a knowledge of other cuisines, familiar wild foods from the surrounding forest and an ability to grow a kitchen garden. But we do not know how they blended and combined their own traditions with the customs of their captors. What went on in the kitchen was invisible to the men who wrote the early chronicles of life in the Caribbean New World.

This problem of invisible kitchens continues through to the present day. History tells us very little about the actual process of cooking, about the ways spices and dishes are combined and dishes named, and all the important details that turns food into cuisine. All we see now and then in the historical record are meals, the end product of a whole performance backstage.

Europeans seem especially fond of separating the process of dining from the act of cooking, to the point where even daily family meals are eaten in a separate room from where they are prepared. How different from my experience of eating with Mayan people in Belize, where the family sits on low stools around the hearth, eating tortillas hot from the *comal* (griddle), as the cook serves out soup or meat from the pot directly into bowls in the diners' hands. This daily routine contrasts with the formality when strangers or important visitors are in the house, and people are seated on benches at the other end of the house, and each is served a bowl and a calabash of tortillas before everyone starts eating.[64]

Among Europeans, being *served* was an important way to demonstrate rank. So we can expect that as logwood cutters became more permanent settlers, and began to accumulate wealth, property and slaves, they sought to distance themselves from the kitchen. Instead they would have wanted to sit and have the food brought to them. This is just another instance of what has often been observed about colonial and expatriate European communities: they show an exaggerated respect for the higher-class customs of the home country, even after those customs have become obsolete at home.[65] In early colonial society, rank was largely measured by the degree to which one could live as a European, even if one had never been to Europe.

Many have remarked on the intensely egalitarian society of buccaneers and pirates, and their hatred for aristocracy, respectability and rank. But at the same time they still came from an aristocratic and highly ranked society where long-established class divisions determined many aspects of a person's rights and life chances. Physically escaping from the system could not erase a lifetime in such a

society, driven into habits of thought, consumption, and even posture. Despite their avowed egalitarian principles, the weight of rank and respectability kept asserting itself even among outlaws. Many successful buccaneers and pirates eventually retired and sought gentility. The infamous Henry Morgan achieved a knighthood and the governorship of Jamaica, a change that required him to turn on his old comrades and suppress their piracy. We should expect that when the Baymen became more established and accumulated land, wealth, slaves and property, they would seek to distinguish themselves from their poorer neighbors.

As in most hierarchical societies, Europeans had established and contested rank and status through lavish consumption from at least as early as the Tudor-era royal courts.[66] In the complex game of consumption and display, notions of refined taste and fashion could exclude people from higher circles, while at the same time there was always a possibility of rising in status through careful extravagance, translating wealth into position. With the early example of explorers like Frances Drake and Hernando Cortes, both men who rose to noble status through their exploits abroad, succeeding generations of Europeans left for exploration and the colonies, where blood and ancestry counted for less and the hierarchy was less elaborate. Because of this, those seeking higher position were just as devoted to a system of ranked consumption as those at the top who depended on it to maintain their position. Colonists and entrepreneurs arriving in a place like Honduras Bay may have wanted to change their social rank, but most did not want to overturn the system of rank itself.[67]

This provides another explanation for why the Baymen stuck to European notions of what constituted a proper diet, and showed a clear preference for European over local or "native" foods. They may have eaten corn tortillas prepared by a Mayan slave, or a spicy pepper-pot made by a cook born in Ashanti or Iboland, but they would not serve this food to guests, and would rarely speak of it in public. Proper food was made with imported wheat flour and salted meat. All evidence we have suggests that when the Baymen thought about luxury, about the ingredients of a good meal, they thought about the kinds of things that were eaten by higher classes in Europe.

At the time of the first settlement of Belize, Europe was already producing or packaging these luxuries for export, to meet the demands of the higher classes of European travelers, soldiers and merchants. British merchant ships carried a store of delicacies called the *petty tally* for higher-class passengers, also used by some captains as an incentive for their crew's good behavior and hard work. The contents of a petty tally from the 1620s gives a good idea of how rich the vocabulary of luxury had already become.

> Fine wheat flour close and well-packed, Rice, Currants, Sugar, Prunes, Cynamon, Ginger, Pepper, Cloves, Green Ginger, Oil, Butter, Holland cheese or old Cheese,

> Wine-vinegar, Canarie-Sack, Aqua-vitae, the best of Wines, the best Waters, the juyce of Limons for the scurvy, white Bisket, Oatmeal, Gammons of Bacon, dried Neats tongues, Beef packed up in Vineger, Legs of Mutton minced and stewed, and close packed up, with tried Sewet or Butter in earthen Pots. To entertain Strangers Marmalade, Suckets, Almonds, Comfits and such like.[68]

There are several very interesting things about this list. The heavy use of spices and sugar as a sign of quality food is a characteristic of medieval times when spices were rare and expensive. As spices and sugar became more common and less expensive, largely as a result of European expansionism and trade, they lost much of their exclusivity, and by the eighteenth century high-class food used much less spice, and substituted instead meat-stock based sauces that required long hours of cooking and elaborate preparation and presentation.[69]

Also intriguing is that many of these items do not actually originate in Europe. The spices and sugar, lemons, almonds and wine, even the oranges for the marmalade, went to England from the far corners of the world. Even the cheese was imported from Holland. But after they were imported, all these items were processed, recombined, cooked and packaged in the home country. Through these manipulations, the *raw* ingredients of the tropics and of far-distant exotic places were magically transformed into expensive European luxury products.[70]

In this process their actual places of origin were virtually *erased*. This was one of the central inventions of European capitalism, an early form of what marketers now call *branding*. It has become so ubiquitous today that we hardly notice it; we think of the Ford Focus as an American car, even though it was assembled in Singapore from parts made in twenty other countries. Nike shoes come from Michael Jordan and America, not from a sweatshop in Honduras. As we will see in later chapters, the whole enterprise of European empire demanded that all raw materials flow to the "center" to be transformed, regularized and relabeled, before they could re-enter the network of empire and disperse once again around the world.

Even at this early date, there were ranks within the basic food groups of preserved starch and meat. The common ration was salted pork, beef or herring, with hard ship's biscuit. The meat was just random chunks of flesh, fat, bone and hide thrown in a barrel with salt and brine. The higher-ranked foods used smoking, vinegar, fat and sugar as preservatives, all of them more expensive than salt. The high-class meats were identified as the particular parts of the animal that were the highly ranked by European consumers: hind legs and tongues. Herring and codfish were carefully graded from bruised salted specimens in barrels, up to the finest fish taken at a specific season from named locations, lightly smoked and tenderly placed in small wooden boxes. Instead of coarse and broken ship's biscuit, the higher-class article was made from the finest white flour, carefully packed in handmade wooden and tin containers to keep it safe from weevils and intact.

Common rations were mass-produced by laborers at mills, slaughterhouses and factories, and were notorious for low quality, adulteration and spoilage. The best pickles and preserves were crafted by women working in kitchens and shops, and they had a tinge of home and recalled memories for consumers in distant and isolated places. This is one way that the export of European delicacies was part of the cultural fabric that kept empires together. These expensive items, carried to the far corners of the world at great cost, reminded consumers of who they were and where they belonged, so that even after two or three generations of living abroad, a family could eat them and think of "home."

Despite their medieval roots, the delicacies of the seventeenth-century European Diaspora had some remarkable continuity forward into the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries. The business of exporting European fruits, fine hams, tongues, candies, jams and cheeses grew and flourished with the empires, becoming signs of luxury and status in amazingly diverse places around the world. We will look at this system in its full nineteenth-century flowering in the next chapter.

Recipe: Salmagundi[71]

The Salad:
2 heads romaine lettuce or other greens
1 lb (450 g) of any mixture of cooked chicken, cooked duck, veal, and pork
3–4 anchovies, several sardines and/or several fillets of pickled herring
2–4 hard-boiled eggs
¼ lb (115 g) pickled red cabbage, cucumber, green tomatoes or other vegetables

For garnish your choice of:
Parsley or cilantro
Onions, raw or cooked
Watercress
Palm hearts

Vinaigrette:
2 tablespoons (30 ml) prepared hot mustard, or 1 tablespoon (15 g) dried hot mustard powder (more if you dare)
6 tablespoons (90 ml) red-wine vinegar
½ teaspoon (2.5 g) salt
1 teaspoon (5 g) freshly ground pepper
½ cup (120 ml) olive oil

Shred the lettuce or greens and lay on a platter. Cut the cold meat in julienne, slice the fish into bite-sized pieces; slice the eggs. Arrange the meat, eggs, fish and pickled vegetables on the lettuce.

Add to the platter your choice of garnish. Mix vinaigrette and dress the salad with it, or serve the dressing on the side.

–4–

Slaves, Masters and Mahogany

An Acrostic

’Mong the trees of the forest that rear their proud crests,
And fall under Man’s never failing behests,
How superior art thou, thou delight of our soil;
On thee we depend, on thee constantly toil,
Gaining wealth for ourselves, gaining glory for thee,
As our artisans prove, thou most beauteous tree.
Never may’st thou be robb’d of thy well deserved name.
Yes, we’ll cherish, protect and watch over thy fame.[1]

While the European settlers on the shores of Honduras Bay were tough and independent, they were involved in a growing world economy that relied on the most inhuman labor system ever invented – the exploitation of African slaves. The shadow of slavery is felt throughout the Caribbean, where it is still very much part of everyday political speech and class consciousness. Slavery left an equally deep though often more subtle mark on food and cuisine, which I explore in this chapter. While others have traced the African and slave origins of Caribbean ingredients and recipes, I will focus on the world-spanning food economy of production, packaging and trade which fed both slaves and masters.[2] *This* system is the direct economic ancestor of the one which feeds most of the world’s population today.

A Century of Unrest

The 1700s brought a long series of disruptions and tumultuous changes to what was called the Caribbean. A global conflict between European powers led each one to try to consolidate its overseas possessions, fitfully and inefficiently transforming them from a loose network of trading posts, ports and conquests into colonies in overseas empires. While the wars and conflicts were fought at sea, and in a few large land battles, the economic and political consequences of war caused major disruptions in every colony and port. Treaties signed in Europe transferred whole territories and islands from one power to another. People might wake up one

morning and find themselves subject to a king who had been a sworn enemy the night before.

Global wars brought all kinds of new cultural influences from Europe to far-distant corners of the planet. New kinds of military establishments and technology created a constant demand for supplies, which in turn led to organizations for making, growing, processing and distributing food, clothing, weapons and innumerable kinds of hardware. European demand for tropical and colonial products grew continually, so that by the end of the eighteenth century sugar, coffee, tea, chocolate and tobacco were part of the daily routine of a broadening middle class.

Tropical mahogany replaced oak and walnut for dining tables and other furniture. Europeans wore imported cotton in place of woolens, muslins and linens. The emerging European states invented economic policies to try to maintain the flow of cheap imports, and protect their export markets. Tariffs, taxes and outright bans on trade were the favored methods, so that prices were always either artificially high or low. In the prosperous trading colonies of North America, this fomented rebellion. In most other parts of the colonial empires, the manipulation of trade bred a rich mix of corruption, smuggling and compromise.

The ebb and flow of conflict combined with slow communications to create a dearth of government in marginal places like Belize, whose ownership was in dispute. While loosely ruled by the governor of Jamaica, the Baymen were largely left to run the place themselves under elected magistrates who followed a set of local laws and customs.[3]

Trade and Empire

The logwood cutters of Honduras Bay both profited and suffered from the growing pains of the European empires. For good or ill, buccaneering and piracy declined and eventually disappeared. Europeans found less use for privateer mercenaries because their professional military forces had grown. Colonial and military expansion eliminated the outlaws' safe havens, and effectively drove them from the Caribbean by 1730. An amnesty offered to pirates in 1717, for example, led a number to retire and settle on the Honduras Bay coast and the adjacent Mosquito Shore of northern Honduras/Nicaragua.[4] The same year, the Spanish drove out the British woodcutters from the northern Yucatan coast, and many of them also moved to what was then called Balise or Belize. There are very few surviving records or travelers' accounts from this period, and the population remained low.

Smuggling gradually replaced theft and piracy, and Belize became a commercial center where goods were offloaded from ocean-going ships to smaller, smugglers' craft. A growing number of local merchants found they could profit selling English and North American goods in nearby Spanish Mexico and Central

America. The Spanish colonial market was ripe for smugglers and corruption because trade was legally limited to goods imported from the Spanish Empire, which led to high prices and a limited variety. All kinds of goods were in demand in the Spanish colonies, especially hardware, tools, cloth, liquor and African slaves.

The emergence of a group of relatively wealthy merchant traders in Belize City during the eighteenth century was socially and economically important, and had major consequences for the future. They created a steady demand for a wide variety of imports, so Belize City began to attract more trading ships, which could sell a cargo for a large profit and load valuable logwood at the same time. Despite the fact that the merchants were feeding an illegal trade, they were a major force promoting law and order within the colony, since it enabled them to trade in peace, and loan and advance money with some assurance of collecting their debts. The successful merchants ended up financing the expansion of the logging industry in Belize, and they constantly sought other kinds of exports to fill outgoing merchant ships.[5]

The Belize City merchants developed a secure social position, and they created a number of longstanding economic patterns. Trading British Empire products to the Spanish also had a synergistic effect on their sales of goods to the local people. With the smuggling trade, there was enough volume to lower prices for the local market, which encouraged locals to depend on the merchants for staple goods, instead of finding alternatives. The merchants became a powerful class who promoted both exports and imports, using their capital to shape and manipulate local markets, and for two centuries they tried to discourage local farming that would undercut imported food. Instead, they wanted the colony to run as a "company store" where they would profit by selling imported food and other necessities to those who worked in the forests, and then profit again when they sold forest products on the world market.

In the meantime the economic base of the colony shifted gradually from logwood and other dyewoods to timber, particularly mahogany and tropical cedar.[6] Changing fashions and competition from other sources of dye gradually lowered the price of logwood, making it less and less lucrative, especially given the high cost of slaves and their labor. Fortunately in Europe a fashion grew among the rich for using fancy tropical woods in furniture and construction. Mahogany from the Caribbean Islands had first been used by the Spanish to build ships, which gradually introduced this wood to Europeans. An "epidemic" of elaborate new home-building projects spread among British nobility, who competed with one another to show off sumptuous interiors that included wood-paneled walls, fine furniture and cabinetry, and elaborate wooden staircases and railings. The fashion for mahogany really took off when Sir Robert Walpole began to build his noble house, Houghton, in 1722. He used vast quantities of mahogany for massive doors,

paneling and banisters, setting an example that was rapidly emulated by other peers.[7] By the middle of the century mahogany had percolated down the class hierarchy and even relatively cheap and plain furniture was made from it. Through Caribbean trade, mahogany became especially popular in the New England colonies. Aromatic tropical cedarwood was a rarer and more costly wood that was used for boxes and humidors for tobacco and cigars, musical instruments and clothes chests.

While logwood cutting was a small-scale enterprise that could be done efficiently by a man and a few slaves, mahogany was a much more complex enterprise that required an elaborate division of labor and more capital. Logwood grows in dense stands in swamps and near creeks, while one mahogany tree in fifty acres qualifies as a dense stand, and the trees have to be hauled or dragged to rivers. Finding, cutting and moving the huge logs to a river without machinery required a team of oxen and the labor of twenty or thirty skilled workers using specialized tools. The teams lived in mahogany camps with at least rough shelter and cooking facilities, where they had to be fed for eight or nine months at a stretch.

As the mahogany economy grew, small operators were driven out by larger firms who could also handle the complex business of collecting the logs at the river mouths, grading them and loading them onto ships. The bigger companies could also buy supplies in bulk, acquire rights to huge tracts of land and borrow money for their operations from banks in Europe and North America. The shift to a mahogany economy gradually changed the character of the settlement from a wide-open frontier full of small entrepreneurs, to what was called a "forestocracy," a hierarchical and class-conscious colony of larger firms, their managers and functionaries and a captive labor force, first of slaves and then of workers bound by shackles of debt.

As early as 1787 the larger mahogany logging companies were moving to consolidate control of the area, and the twelve largest controlled four-fifths of the land and owned almost half the slaves.[8] The new social order was anything but secure and stable, however, because the world market for mahogany was fickle. Other larger producers like Mexico or Brazil could flood the market, or a war or recession could lower demand and raise shipping costs and expenses, so companies often went bankrupt, or had to sell off assets. Nevertheless, mahogany and cedar remained Belize's principal exports throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries.

Conflict, Dislocation and Slavery

Despite the lack of any Spanish settlement in the area, the Spanish considered the mainland of Central America to be their province, and treated the Baymen as interlopers and squatters. The legal status of the settlement was never determined by

European treaties, some of which, as we saw in Chapter 3, gave the British rights to cut wood, but not to settle or farm. Even today neighboring Guatemala has not dropped its territorial claim to the country.[9] Spanish forces harassed and attacked the logwood cutters, and in 1717, 1730, 1754 and 1779 forced many to leave, and took others captive.[10] Each time, settlers returned, and the population was augmented in 1787 by about 2,000 refugees (approximately 1,500 of whom were slaves) from the Mosquito Shore of Honduras and Nicaragua, which had been given up to the Spanish by treaty. After the American Revolution, many loyalists left for the Caribbean, and some of them, too, ended up joining the Baymen. This period of instability ended in 1798 when a final Spanish invasion attempt was repulsed after a short naval battle.[11]

Colonial historians often refer to this period when explaining why agriculture was underdeveloped in the colony; they assume that the lack of security made the Baymen reluctant to plant crops or build permanent houses. On the contrary, the persistence of the settlers in returning each time after being pushed out, and their general contempt for Spanish claims to the area show that they had every intention of making Belize a permanent settled place. Scattered references from the eighteenth century show that they built houses and roads, and planted crops including coconuts and fruit trees. These "provision grounds" were especially important during the years of the American Revolution, when food trade was disrupted and imported food became scarce and expensive.[12] Still, the official fiction that the colonists were really just "camping out" on the shore while cutting timber meant that there were no official plans for agricultural colonization until well into the nineteenth century, when the Spanish threat had receded.

Slave Society

The Atlantic world of the eighteenth century was dominated by the slave trade and the economy was built on the labor of slaves everywhere south of New England. The British were enthusiastic participants in the African slave trade, but they also condoned and abetted the enslavement of huge numbers of Native Americans from the Atlantic margins of Central and South America. Indians from North America ended up enslaved in the Caribbean, and Indians from Central America were sold in North America.[13] From very early on there were also many people of mixed parentage who fit no clear categories, particularly in a place like Belize where the non-slave "European" population was itself such a mosaic. The census of 1790 counted 2,656 inhabitants, of whom 2,024 were slaves, 371 free "colored" or mixed, and 261 officially "white."

As Bolland documents so well, the qualities and practices of slavery in Belize were quite different from those found in the plantation economies of the Caribbean Islands and the southern colonies of North America.[14] There is no setting where

slavery could be anything but horrifying and brutal. But in Belize the ease of escape into the forest or freedom in adjoining Spanish territory and the fact that so many slaves worked under light supervision in the forest meant that masters could not always use the same harsh methods of discipline that could work in the closed world of a sugar estate in Jamaica.[15]

In Belize slaves were paid or given goods in compensation for their work on Saturdays. Furthermore, as elsewhere in the Caribbean, they often spent Sundays and evenings working on their own account, trading and selling in the marketplace, and sometimes accumulating property or buying themselves out of slavery. In the forest they often carried guns for hunting, and large machetes with which they were highly skilled. This is of course not to portray slavery as any sort of easy life: mahogany logging was dangerous and strenuous work that killed and maimed hundreds over the years, and slaves rebelled, resisted and fled.

Another unusual aspect of slavery in Belize was that for most of the year, adult male slaves lived in small camps out in the forest, isolated from their women, children and elderly relatives. A few women worked in camps as cooks, but most lived with their children in Belize City or on estates built by slave-owners scattered along the riverbanks and offshore cays (islands). So during the nine or ten months of the year they were in mahogany camps, the men lived entirely outside any family life or household economy, and they subsisted mainly on rations and what they hunted and fished from the surrounding rainforest. In the other half of slave society women raised children and did all kinds of domestic labor – cooking, cleaning, serving and tending their owners. They could be rented out for other kinds of work such as cleaning streets or hauling firewood, and some had crafts like carpentry and tanning. They had much more contact with white people and the "free colored" population than enslaved men.

In towns and estates older men, women and children probably did a good deal of farming; at the very least they cultivated gardens around their houses and raised poultry and probably a pig or two. What they did not eat was sold in markets – which were the only source of fresh food for most people living in the city.[16]

The two halves of this slave economy came together once a year, when the mahogany crews broke up and men streamed into town. The return and reunion centered on the Christmas holiday and were marked by celebrations among all classes. While the Europeans and "free colored" held balls, dances, hunting parties, parades and sailboat, rowboat and horse races, the slaves were given special rations, while they spent their own earnings fixing up their houses and in revelry.

Henderson reports "Christmas is the time of year that brings all ranks together. The master's house is a gathering place – all barriers are lowered." The members of different African ethnic groups among the slaves would assemble around *gombay* and *samby* drums for music and dance. He marveled at their endurance in staying drunk and awake for weeks at a time.[17] A traveler from 1825 reported:

> Their most joyous period is Christmas, when every slave claims a kind of temporary freedom for two or three weeks; and during this time the settlement is in a state of riot. Dancing about the streets, night and day, is their chief employment, till the accustomed period has elapsed. During this season, the militia, consisting of all the White inhabitants, is kept constantly under arms.[18]

The editor of the *Honduras Gazette and Commercial Advertiser* similarly described Christmas in Belize in 1827.

> Among the white, and more respectable people of colour, "fun and feasting" prevail as much, (and pretty much after the same fashion) as in Britain … almost all the slaves in this community, during the whole of the Holydays, neither labour, nor are called upon to do any labour whatever, but on the contrary, parade the streets during the day in large parties, preceded by Music and Flags – the males in better clothes than many respectable tradesmen in England can afford to wear, and the females in silken, or most gaudy attire, and very frequently with costly ornaments, such as genuine gold necklaces, ear and finger rings, silver mounted parasols, etc. etc. etc. In their progress they walk in a body, sans ceremonie, into the halls of all the merchants or respectable persons" houses, and commence dancing and singing, at the same time calling with the utmost *sang froid* for refreshments, which, we believe, are seldom if ever refused to them, however numerous their party may be; and as the owners of the slaves furnish each of them at every Christmas with wines, etc. (or money to the amount of at least £1 to procure them) they club together, and at night, and generally in the open air, continue feasting, drinking, dancing, and singing, after their own fashion, very often enlivening their performances, or at all events, adding to the noise thereof, by the incessant discharge of guns; and the sun, in most cases, shines upon them the next day before they separate …[19]

The previous year, the same newspaper published an account of the cost of keeping a slave in Belize that included a "Christmas box of 6 shillings 8 pence at Christmas," and a "party and ball at Christmas: 1 gallon rum, beef or other butcher's meat, fish, turtle, liquieurs, sweet wine, etc …"[20] Surely few masters were so generous, but the Christmas holiday was obviously the central social event of the year for everyone in the settlement, free and enslaved.

Even as early as the eighteenth century, color was not a reliable guide to status or class in The Bay; mixed marriages and informal "concubinage" were the rule rather than the exception and there were very few European women about. While European immigrants and members of the high elite clung to their "white" status, there was a growing mixed category, a nascent middle class, that only much later in the nineteenth century shed the label "free colored" and came to identify themselves as *Creoles*.[21] The wide range of skin coloring and ethnic mixture contrasted with many other British colonies where color lines were more strongly enforced. A newspaper editorial in 1826, when slavery was still practiced, defended the local lack of a strict color line dividing white from black, saying of free colored;

> The system of intolerance practiced against this worthy race, in other Colonies, is not rigidly maintained in Honduras, and, indeed, were it so, we should grieve for the injustice which the talents, the education, and the gentlemanly deportment of many excellent persons must submit to …[22]

North Americans found the social mixture of Belize especially disconcerting, coming from a society that classified everyone by color and blood fractions. The famous diplomat and explorer John Lloyd Stephens passing through Belize in 1839 found himself seated at the dinner table with two "coloured gentlemen." Surprised and a bit shocked he said:

> I learned that the great work of practical amalgamation [of races], the subject of so much angry controversy at home, had been going on quietly [here] for generations; that colour was considered mere matter of taste; and that some of the most respectable inhabitants had black wives and mongrel children, whom they educated with as much care, and made money for with as much zeal, as if their skins were perfectly white. I hardly knew whether to be shocked or amused at this condition of society …[23]

Later he reassures his American readers by noting that in the local schools "the brightest boys … were those that had in them the most white blood."[24]

While everything seemed remarkably equal to these Americans, and there were people of color in the elite, there was still widespread prejudice toward "free colored" people of a lower class. Henderson reveals his prejudice when he says "The people of colour and free-blacks, who are likewise numerous, all possess some property; a few are rich, and are alike distinguishable for the feature which so strongly characterizes the same race throughout the West Indies, an expensive gratification of their appetites, and an extravagant passion for dress."[25] A newspaper article from 1826 expresses the same prejudice – that the colored poor were improvident and lazy, in terms that were repeated over and over during the following century:

> Many of these fellows have establishments up the rivers Belize, Sibun, Manatee, Mullins and Sittee, the soil adjacent to which is naturally fertile in most parts, but they will not provide so far for themselves, as to cultivate even yams or plantains, which are their principal food. There, with the utmost ease and facility, they would obtain all the comforts they could possibly require, if their inclinations were in the least bent on industry, but on the contrary, they abandon their grounds and repair to this Town, for the doing of which, we must certainly say, they seem to have good reason, for HERE they find means to support themselves wholly WITHOUT labour but HOW—is a point that demands immediate inquiry …[26]

Aside from this comment, we know little about the diet or standards of living of the free colored class. Because they had to pay for it, the elite gave much more attention to the diet of slaves.

The Slaves' Food

There were three basic ways that slaves were fed in the New World. Some were given rations that plantation owners bought locally or imported. Others were organized by their masters into gangs and crews that planted food crops during times when their labor was not needed. In places where land was available and labor could be spared, slaves were given plots of land and time to grow their own food.[27] Even where slaves were fed rations, they would plant gardens around their dwellings and raise chickens and other small animals. In most places the slaves planted familiar African plants, and they quickly adopted New World and European crops too. Some grew crops for markets that were mainly run by slave women. Here, slaves often sold their rations, and bought fresh food to break the monotony of salted fish and meat.[28]

Belize does not fit easily into any category because it combined all three systems. Slaves working on mahogany gangs or other tasks out "in the bush" were fed rations. On long-established mahogany camps, men might clear a patch for some yams and plantains in order to supplement their diet. Slave women, children, and elderly folk who lived on rural estates had their own plantations and gardens, and on some estates they were forced to grow food and cash crops like coconuts and coffee.[29] A newspaper article from 1827 said that a slave sometimes had "contracts with his master for the supply of his gangs with the produce of the soil, such as yams, plantains, etc."[30] A cotton estate that appears for sale in an 1839 newspaper is reported to include "2,300 plantain suckers, fields of rice, corn, cocoa [cocoyam tubers], yams and yampa, plus 1 acre of sugar cane." [31]

The slaves who farmed their own plots had a special preference for crops like yams, taro, sweet potatoes and plantains, which could be planted a few at a time, left untended for periods and then harvested gradually as needed. Urban slaves were probably fed by their masters most of the time, but may also have had small gardens, or at least some fowl, and their better access to the cash economy meant that they could buy food in the city markets. Plantains became the staple food for those who were not on rations of flour and pork.

Unfortunately, we know very little about the markets and gardens of slaves in Belize. Most farming and trading was carried on outside the view of white folk. As elsewhere in the Caribbean, slaves were secretive about their independent cash earning and farming, knowing that masters would reduce their rations if they knew about gardens and livestock. In any case, European attitudes to farming as a man's job meant that they often did not even see or notice women's gardens; they did not

even count as agriculture as the English defined it. For the visitors to the colony who left us the best contemporary accounts, slave women and children were almost invisible, though the local markets were thought "colorful."

In Belize, as elsewhere, slave-owners were caught in a mess of contradictions when it came to feeding their slaves. On the one hand, giving them rations meant they could be disciplined easily by withholding food, and they could be worked harder and longer without taking away time for independent farming. Slaves on rations were entirely dependent on the master. On the other hand, rations could be expensive and hard to transport to distant camps. Giving slaves their own land and time to grow their own food was also problematic from the owners" point of view, since it led to more independence (or as they saw it, "discipline problems'). Slaves were constantly slipping off to work on their own farms, and the estates' tools and equipment were always "disappearing." Over time, slaves were often able to turn privileges and gifts into entitlements and obligations, to the constant frustration of their masters.[32]

The trick, from the masters' point of view, was to allow slaves a certain amount of their own time and some space for their own enterprise, but to keep them fundamentally dependent on rations. They could not be allowed to grow so much that they had independence. The prospect of rewards at the end of the year in the form of luxury foods, clothes and drink was an important element in finding this balance. All the "best" things came from the master. Both staples and luxuries were therefore part of the regime of keeping slaves disciplined and controlled.

There are important parallels between the balance of dependence and independence between masters and slaves, and the way Britain treated its colonies. There was always a danger that too much self-sufficiency could lead to rebellion and independence. The solution was to maintain a firm grip on vital resources, and to make sure that colonies continued to depend on the mother country for both daily bread and those luxurious rewards for hard work. In order for both systems to work, the superior party has to control "treats," the luxuries that serve as incentives and rewards for hard work, both the daily "lifts" like sugar, rum and tobacco, and the rarer ones like sweet liqueurs, fine clothing and imported food. All foods, clothes and liquor had to be part of a carefully scaled and graded system of ranks.

If this system was to function, all the parties had to be convinced that the treats controlled by the master were indeed better than anything they could get by themselves. From this perspective we see that the whole system of discipline of slaves and work in the colonial order rested on a scale of values that made some kinds of foods and consumer goods *special*. And they were special not just because they were simply "better" – after all, why is white sugar inherently any better than brown, or homemade corn beer better than imported beer made from barley and hops? No, the slave system taught slaves a lot about the qualities and values of all kinds of consumer goods, and it taught that each grade of goods was appropriate

to a different level of humanity. Therefore, any touch of luxury carried with it the dignity of a higher rank. When slaves drank whiskey instead of rum, and ate fine white wheat bread instead of yams, they literally tasted freedom.[33] Because of the heavy symbolic weight of food in the slave economy, farming in Belize developed with a peculiar combination of the casual and the meaningful, of shame and pride, independence and dependence, tinged overall with a profound ambivalence. Home-grown food created a practical independence, but independence could bear bitter fruit, and in any case the food you grew never had the status, never appeared as tasty as that which appeared every day on the master's table.

Many of the slave-owning colonial class said that the slaves were simply "aping" the behavior of their "betters" when they dressed up and had their Christmas binge of champagne and roast beef. I don't think any slave was under the illusion that eating like a white man made him or her white or free. But by asserting their ability to consume the best, to enjoy the same cultivated pleasures as the master of the estate, they claimed their dignity as human beings. They exercised *choice* and *taste*, which are fundamental to a modern conception of freedom. The cruelty of their situation was that the very same luxuries that gave them some release from the abjection of slavery were shackles that bound them to it. The ration of rum, sugar and tobacco was an incentive that kept slaves working, despite the possibility of escape through the forest. And when slaves spent their painstakingly accumulated shillings on sprucing up their houses and a Christmas binge, they increased their self-respect but put off the day when they could buy their own freedom.

Slaves were acutely aware of status distinctions, which were reflected in rations and other consumption privileges. In plantation societies the greatest distinction of rank was "house" and "field" slaves, with house slaves eating out of the main kitchen, instead of getting regular rations. In contrast in Belize the slaves who worked out on the mahogany gangs, skilled men in their prime, were the most valuable and highly ranked.[34] By association, the highly ranked daily food for slaves was their ration of imported flour and pork. Lower-ranked slaves ate plantains, fish, yams and other local foods, which were less desirable.

Henderson described the highly valued mahogany slave's ration as firmly fixed "by custom" at "Irish salt pork, to each negro 5 lb per week. Of flour, always the finest, 1 lb per day each. Of rum, supposing a gill to each slave per day for 260 working days. Sugar, 12 lb per year. Two suits of osnaburgs (fatigue), one pair coarse shoes, tobacco and pipes."[35]

The receipts submitted by Colonel Despard for the trips he took in 1786 exploring the interior of the colony reveal actual practice rather than custom. For eight hired slaves, on a three-month trip, he bought six barrels of flour (535 kg), five barrels of beef (475 kg), 46 gallons of rum (174 l), and small amounts of coffee, sugar and tobacco.[36] If Despard ate from these supplies, this works out to

almost 1½ lbs of flour (680 g), 1¼ lbs of beef (570 g) and almost 8 oz (230 ml) of straight rum per man every day. This suggests that Henderson's figures were a minimum, rather than the average. Plantains sometimes substituted for flour: an 1826 article spoke of rationing "7 quarts of fine flour, or a proportional quantity of plantains, called here *bread kind* and in general as acceptable."[37]

I have not been able to find a contemporary account of slaves cooking and eating in mahogany camps; Figure 4.1 is a later photograph. Food was probably best in larger more permanent camps where a female cook made breads and stews during the day. But archeologist and colonial doctor Thomas Gann's graphic description of a small mahogany camp in the 1920s captures the daily routine, despite the gap of nearly two centuries:

> Each man is allowed four pounds of salt pork and seven quarts of flour weekly as a ration. The cooking is simple in the extreme. A large fire of dry sticks is made, over which is hung the common cooking-pot, and into this is dropped each man's piece of pork (with a string attached, hanging over the side, by which it may be identified, and pulled out when done), and his flour made into a round ball of dough. In about ten minutes the half-raw hunks of pork and sodden dough-balls are pulled out, and each man swallows his portion as rapidly as possible. The broth, being common property, is lapped up in calabashes by each in turn. Some of the men carry a private supply of plantains, which are cooked in the common pot, and, as all carry guns, a little game is sometimes procured to help out this meagre ration.[38]

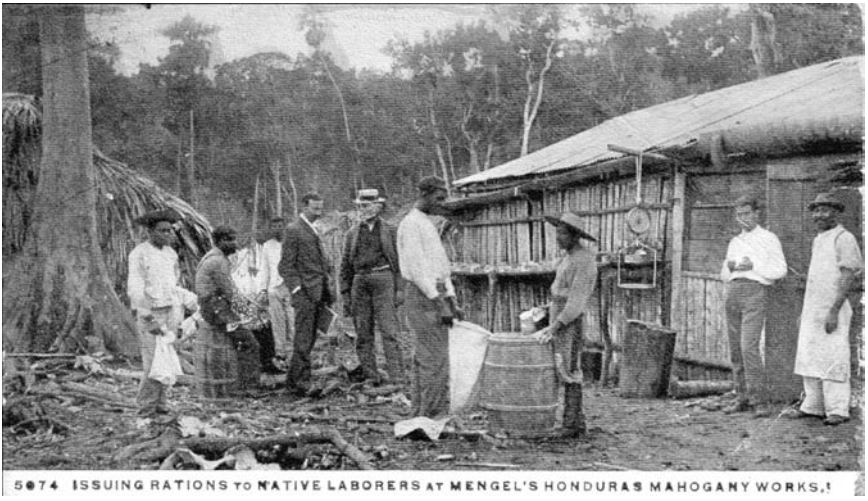


Figure 4.1 Rare postcard of flour rations being distributed from a barrel in a Belize mahogany camp, early decades of the twentieth century.
Source: author's collection.

This dish was "pork and dough-boys." Sailors and loggers elsewhere used small metal tags impressed with letters or numbers on each string to identify the owner of the piece of meat in the communal pot. I have never heard of anyone finding tags like this in Belize, but I doubt if anyone has looked. Given a little more time, men would add baking powder to the dough, and bake small balls in a makeshift oven made from a kerosene tin or a cast-iron pot, to make johnycakes.

The monotony of camp food was broken only once during the mahogany season, at the *first log* party thrown when the first mahogany tree was dragged to the riverbank. Neighboring camps were invited, and once again Gann's later account has to serve in place of contemporary records. The party he attended was served

> great joints of pork, turkey, legs of venison and wild hog, corassow, roast gibnut and armadillo, piles of corn cake, johny cake, and Spanish pan dulce, with lots of boiled plantain, sweet potato, yam, and – best of all – unlimited white rum. Then there was dancing.[39]

Globalization at the Margins

The ration that fed slaves in Belize was the first *global diet*, a kind of nineteenth-century equivalent of McDonald's hamburgers. It was cheap, widely available and could be eaten quickly with a minimum of preparation. Most important, in this non-refrigerated era, it kept well in its universally standardized container, the wooden barrel held together with iron hoops.[40] The ration was used to feed crews and work groups that were mobile, whose time was too valuable to be spent procuring their own food, or who were working in an inhospitable environment like the Arctic. These groups encompassed most of the great extractive industries of the era, from the maritime specialists like whalers, sealers and shark-fishers to loggers and miners in remote areas, and the mobile cowboys, shepherds and gauchos who herded livestock on the plains and pampas. For decades before oil was pumped from underground, it was rendered from the carcasses of dead animals all over the world in a vast episode of plunder.

The global industrial ration always included some kind of salted flesh, either beef, pork or fish. Wheat flour was the basic starch. Often pulses like beans or peas supplemented the starch and meat, but these spoiled more quickly than salt meat and flour. Some kind of strong alcohol, like rum, made meals easier to wash down, and the rations usually included other stimulants like sugar, coffee, tea and tobacco. This diet was completely deficient in many nutrients, and men developed scurvy and other nutritional diseases if kept on it too long. By the end of the nineteenth century sailors knew that fresh fruits and citrus juice could deter the scurvy that came from a lack of vitamin C in the diet. But the host of other ills from this

diet created a constant demand for patent medicines to either "bind" or "purge" the stomach.

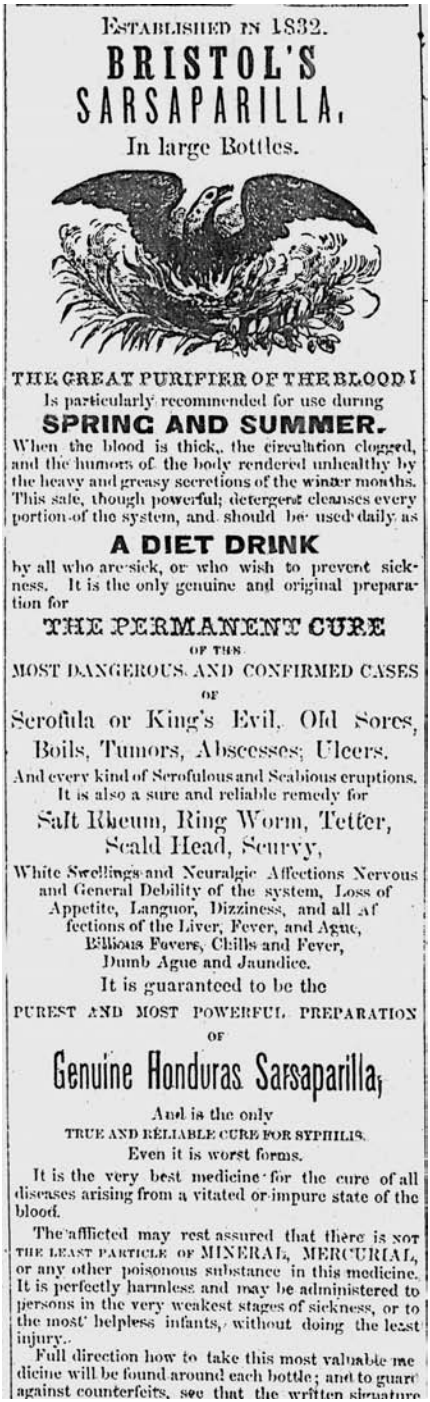
Everywhere that nineteenth-century extractive industries went, the ground is still littered with patent medicine bottles. The irony is that many of the ingredients for patent medicines, including sarsaparilla, opium, coca and castor oil, were themselves the product of tropical industries (Figure 4.2). They only became medicines after they were shipped to Europe or North America, where they were processed, mixed and packaged, to be sent out again around the world as "modern" consumer goods. While the ultimate power to cure came from exotic tropical sources, these substances had to move across the world and back in processed form in order to go from herb to "medicine."

In every place men found different ways to combine and prepare their rations, depending on their local circumstances. Swedish loggers fried their American bacon in small pans – each man had his own. Then they mixed the flour into a batter and fried pancakes in the fat.[41] In the Australian Outback, stockmen made dough from the flour and cooked it in the campfire coals to make *damper*.[42] In North America salt pork was boiled with beans, though the first California gold-mining 49ers were so unfamiliar with the rations that they did not know to soak the beans overnight, and so ate them hard.[43] The same rations were traded to indigenous peoples, or were fed to groups that had been driven off their land onto reservations, so that flour, cakes and breads, sugar, tobacco and alcohol became essential parts of "native" food and diet in many parts of the world.[44]

Without this ration, industrial capitalism would never have been able to expand to a worldwide system so quickly. The minerals, lumber, hides and animal oils produced by mobile male crews around the world were essential industrial materials of the prepetroleum era. The European luxury and fashion markets were also dependent on the far-flung empire of working men for whalebone, furs, skins, feathers and pigments used to make cosmetics, hats and garments.

Even more important, supplying the ration was a continuing source of huge profits, which provided the capital needed to build railroads, buildings and the rest of the infrastructure of industrialism. The workers who caught and packed codfish in Newfoundland were just as exploited as mahogany cutters in Belize, kept in debt servitude and forced to buy their supplies from a company store. The monopolistic companies that grew to dominate bulk food exports were ruthless and highly profitable.

Just as the colonial elite in Belize City profited doubly by selling mahogany to Europe and basic supplies to their workers, the whole world became something of a "company store." By the early 1800s, Belize, like many other places, was shifting from buying its flour and salt meat from European sources to finding suppliers in the growing eastern United States. As the 1828 *Honduras Almanac* said:



ESTABLISHED IN 1832.

BRISTOL'S SARSAPARILLA,

In large Bottles.

THE GREAT PURIFIER OF THE BLOOD!

Is particularly recommended for use during

SPRING AND SUMMER.

When the blood is thick, the circulation clogged, and the humors of the body rendered unhealthy by the heavy and greasy secretions of the winter months. This safe, though powerful; detergent cleanses every portion of the system, and should be used daily as

A DIET DRINK

by all who are sick, or who wish to prevent sickness. It is the only genuine and original preparation for

THE PERMANENT CURE

OF THE

MOST DANGEROUS AND CONFIRMED CASES

OF

Scrofula or King's Evil, Old Sores, Boils, Tumors, Abscesses; Ulcers.

And every kind of Scrofulous and Scabious eruptions. It is also a sure and reliable remedy for

Salt Rheum, Ring Worm, Tetter, Scald Head, Scurvy,

White Swellings and Neuralgic Affections Nervous and General Debility of the system, Loss of Appetite, Languor, Dizziness, and all affections of the Liver, Fever, and Ague, Billious Fevers, Chills and Fever, Dumb Ague and Jaundice.

It is guaranteed to be the

PUREST AND MOST POWERFUL PREPARATION

OF

Genuine Honduras Sarsaparilla;

And is the only

TRUE AND RELIABLE CURE FOR SYPHILIS,

Even it is worst forms.

It is the very best medicine for the cure of all diseases arising from a vitated or impure state of the blood.

The afflicted may rest assured that there is NOT THE LEAST PARTICLE OF MINERAL, MERCURIAL, or any other poisonous substance in this medicine. It is perfectly harmless and may be administered to persons in the very weakest stages of sickness, or to the most helpless infants, without doing the least injury.

Full direction how to take this most valuable medicine will be found around each bottle; and to guard against counterfeits, see that the written signature

Figure 4.2 Advertisement for a medicinal tonic made from "Genuine Honduras Sarsaparilla." The irony is, of course, that the bark was probably gathered in Belize, then sent to New York where it was processed, extracted and bottled, and then came back to Belize at a much higher price, but probably without any more efficacy.
Source: *The Colonist,* January 27, 1866.

> The imports were chiefly from the cities of Boston and New York, and consisted of flour, preferred to the English, pork, beef, and other salt provisions, livestock, furniture, tobacco, lumber, groceries, spirits, India goods, cotton sheeting and shirting, the manufactures of that country, etc. etc., which afforded competition with the importations from Europe, and the benefit arising therefrom was generally felt and appreciated by the community …[45]

Many of the first great fortunes in New England were founded on the export of salt codfish, and in the years that followed expansionism to the west was driven by a steady overseas market for flour, salt beef and salt pork.[46] Pennsylvania and upstate New York were primary producers of flour for export. By the early 1800s, when Belizean slave-owners began to buy their salt pork and beef in New Orleans, the frontier had shifted further west. In the Ohio River valley, what is now Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana, settlers cleared small patches of forest for corn to feed their families and make whiskey, but their cash came from pigs which fattened on acorns and hickory nuts in the forests. As winter approached they herded pigs to the riverbanks for slaughter. Packed in barrels, they rode flatboats all the way downriver to New Orleans. Boatmen walked, or poled and pulled keelboats home, with loads of coffee, molasses, salt and sugar.[47]

The accumulation of wealth from all this trade fed a great cycle of global growth. New sources of mercantile wealth created new kinds of social mobility, and these nouveau riches were great consumers of luxury products that expressed their desire for "class" as well as wealth. And these luxuries were almost by definition *imports*, which incorporated the products of slave labor and extractive production in the tropics and elsewhere.[48]

This huge network grew like a weed throughout the early nineteenth century, meeting the demand for cheap industrial food, and tying together incredibly diverse groups of people who knew nothing about one another in economic interdependence. Then, as now, world trade brings food to the table from far away as if by magic, as if the meat grew in a barrel, as the burger appears from a fast-food window, with nothing there to tell us a story of its distant and complex origins. To really appreciate this far-flung and complicated nineteenth-century food system, in the next chapter we will look at the diversity of food and drink that appeared on shelves in even such a poor and distant place as Belize.

Out of Diversity, a Common Culture

As discussed in Chapter 3, the Europeans and Africans who settled Belize spoke many native languages, and grew up eating the distinct diets and dishes of their many places of origin. But from this diversity came a peculiar kind of uniformity. By the year 1800, visitors to Belize saw the place as one society divided into

slaves, whites and free colored. Divided by color and class, there was still something approaching a single culture, which included a common language that had come to be called "Bay English" or Creole.[49] Of course the whites distanced themselves as much as possible from the rest, complaining about the slaves' "Devil dances," and condemning the supposed laziness of the free colored.[50] But after more than a century of settlement, all classes and colors shared a basic set of knowledge and values; they ate many of the same foods, were bitten by the same assortment of flies and mosquitoes and celebrated the same holidays.

Whatever the reason, cultural diversity was submerged in the colonial categories of free and slave, white and dark. The remarkable hodgepodge of European settlers became simply "white." No doubt the continued hostility of the Spanish, who saw the settlers in geopolitical terms as British, wherever they really came from, did a lot to make the differences among the settlers seem trivial. By 1800 whatever regional and ethnic differences there were among the white settlers were being superseded by distinctions of wealth. Colonel Despard's efforts to distribute land to the newly arrived refugees from the Mosquito Coast in 1787 ran afoul of the entrenched interests of the small group of mahogany cutters who owned most of the slaves and land already.[51] When he sought to include the free colored class in the land distribution, he provoked a response that led to his removal.

As elsewhere in the Caribbean, the crosscutting action of classifications of race and wealth left society divided up into small factions and fractions. Some free colored, for example, had slaves and small mahogany works, and so had different interests than the poor colored and slaves. But as small-scale operators they had little in common with the six or seven families that ran the settlement. The whites were similarly divided not just by property, but also by the differences among old settlers, refugees from the Mosquito Coast, tories from the American Revolution and the administrators and merchants from Europe who were usually sojourners, there for a time and then gone home. It is little wonder that distinctions of national origins had little power to classify people, given all the other ways of dividing them up.

Open expressions of ethnicity among slaves were also repressed, though the African drumming and ritual of different "tribes" continued right up to the twentieth century. As late as the 1880s the whites were concerned about "faction fights" among the ethnic groups of the black population.[52] Besides coming from different places in Africa, some of the slaves had first spent time on Caribbean islands, and some had been born there before being brought to Belize. These divisions were further complicated by the loyalties that male slaves developed to the mahogany gangs they worked with; gangs which competed fiercely in Christmas sailing and rowing races. And then many slaves also belonged to particular estates for much of their lives, and some developed strong connections to places and families.[53] So again, while ethnic distinctions never disappeared completely, they were mixed up

with many other forms of classification and identification. In this context, food was not a powerful symbol of ethnic identity. Freed from its role as a marker and identifier of ethnic difference, food and diet went through a process of mixture and reformulation largely invisible through historic documents.

As we shall see in the next chapter, the decline in the importance of national and ethnic origins in the eighteenth century did not last long into the nineteenth century, when whole new populations entered or returned to Belize, bringing a whole new set of foods and cuisines.

Recipe: Pork and Dough-boys (one day's ration)

1 lb (450 g) salt pork or pork jowl
1 lb (450 g) flour
½ lb (225 g) grated fresh or salt pork fat, lard or shortening
½ pint (230 ml) water
Sugar (optional and to taste)

Soak (steep) the salt pork in water for 24 hours before cooking; if you substitute unsmoked bacon or hog jowl you may not have to soak the meat, depending on its saltiness.

Mix the flour, fat and water together and knead into a stiff dough. Add several tablespoons of sugar if desired or a few raisins if they are handy.

Divide the dough in two, and wrap each ball in floured cloth – cheesecloth will work, as will light cotton sheeting or the "pudding bags" available at some gourmet shops. Tie with string. If you have no cloth, you can still make the dough-boys, but you will have to make sure the water only simmers instead of boils.

Boil the dough-boys in water for 4–5 hours. During the last hour, add the salt pork. Old-fashioned salt pork might have taken many hours to cook, but the modern kind cooks quickly.[54]

–5–

The Taste of Colonialism

Nineteenth-century Belize saw both fundamental change from and remarkable continuities with earlier times. Everything changed, yet nothing changed at all. In 1800 Belize was an isolated territorial possession, with a tiny population consisting mostly of slaves. Slavery ended and by 1900 Belize was a Crown Colony with its own governor, a complex multiethnic society closely linked to Europe and America by regular steamships and modern telephones; Belize City had electric lighting, an ice factory and a bewildering array of global goods in every shop. But the central fact of Belize's position in the world had not changed at all. Workers still received rations and spent most of their year cutting mahogany in the rainforest. And despite thousands of acres of fertile land, Belize was still completely dependent on imported food.

This chapter explains how food helped keep far-flung colonies like Belize culturally tied to the home country. Food became part of a local class system built around skin color and language, and we see the beginnings of a local cuisine, but at the same time food was becoming a potent symbol of progress and civilization, ideas that originated in Europe and North America. The basic dynamics of the economic and culture engine that made Belize a dependent consumer economy, never feeding itself and never developing any substantial local industry, were established in the nineteenth-century. Throughout the century, there were few long-term investments in production, education or infrastructure that would have made Belize a strong actor in the world economy. Capital and profits did not stay in Belize. Money made there was spent on imported goods or invested somewhere else. The lack of food production in Belize was not a result of its economic *failure*, but of its great *success* in the lumber business.

The central paradox of globalization, the entangling of local and global, specific and general, was just as much a part of the nineteenth as it was of the twentieth century. The local and global are so thoroughly connected that they are really part of the same thing. Ideas like *creolization* and *hybridity* apply just as well to Belize in the nineteenth century as they do today. You cannot understand the uniqueness of Belize without understanding just how typical it was – and vice versa. The things that made Belize different and unique were the same things that made it so much like any other European colony.

The second point of this chapter is that taste and food preferences, cuisine and cooking, were a central part of economic underdevelopment. Older studies of colonialism showed how colonial powers coerced, controlled, supervised and manipulated local cultures in order to control and dominate them. The case of food in Belize gives a different perspective by showing how colonial policy was full of contradictions. The government and the elite of the colony were plainly concerned with getting Belize to import *less* food. They ceaselessly promoted local food production, to no avail. Instead, copying the consumption habits of the British was, by a strange inversion, a form of *resistance* to colonial pressure. The British wanted local people to be "in their places," neatly categorized by race and language, each happy to eat their traditional foods. As I will show, by mixing up their cuisines and eating European foods, local people were breaking through these barriers and boundaries, and achieving a kind of categorical equality with the British. Ironically, in doing so they made Belize even more economically dependent on the Empire, less self-sufficient and more fragile.

Another irony is that local people had to be more British than the British, in order to achieve respectability in colonial society (as was the case with the logwood cutters in Chapter 3). In real British cosmopolitan society, the upper class was full of eccentricities, and was bound together by kinship, nobility, schools and shared classical education. In London consumption was just one of many ways the elite were different from the common people. But the kind of English people who came out to run the colonies and the local "whites" of European descent had a much more tenuous grip on status. Consumption therefore became a much more important way for them to cement their status; they made elaborate shows of expensive and fashionable clothes, foods and public entertainments. Instead of the complex play of language and culture, connections and ancestry in Britain, in Belize money and the way you spent it was the bedrock of status. In addition, the elite hewed to middle-class British notions of respectability – a house to receive guests, public display of devotion to the church, patriotism and respect for marriage and legitimate children. Their status depended on it, more so than in England. The result was a society where consumption, religion and kinship were the pillars of social order; achieving respectability required a degree of conformity that we would find terribly stifling today. Being "civilized," as colonialists meant the term, required more effort than in the home country.

One of the major signs of civilization in the nineteenth century, anywhere in the colonial world, was a newspaper. The first regular press appeared in Belize City in 1822, and after that date there was always at least one weekly newspaper, which provides a constant and rich source of information to the historian. The substance of this chapter derives from countless hours spent in the windowless basement of the Bancroft Library in Berkeley, California, winding through reels of microfilm, immersed in the tiny world of Belize editors and writers. Their vision was always

limited and myopic, but we are also fortunate to have a number of accounts written by visitors and travelers, and other government and official documents, which fill in some of the gaps.

Migrants, Food and Ethnic Identity

Most of the people who live in Belize today are descended from migrants who arrived in the nineteenth century. Each group brought their own diet and cuisine. Today some of their descendants remain separate and "ethnic," while others have taken on a mixed Creole identity. One form of food history, which could be called the "stew pot," would simply trace the ancestral diets of each immigrant group, and then show how each one survives in various ways into the present as part of a national mix (this is the method of most tourist guidebooks). Another approach would be to look at Belize as a melting pot where all the different groups contributed something to the unique national flavor. Both would be relatively easy to write, since today it is still quite possible to gather up unique recipes from the different ethnic communities in Belize. So Garifuna recipes are heavy on plantains, fish and coconut milk; the Mestizo depend on corn and beans and use lots of lard, etc.

I have already written a bit about the African continuities in slave culture, and it is tempting to continue a genealogical approach that simply traces each modern recipe back to some ancestor. This would certainly be palatable to many Belizean readers, since modern Belize portrays itself in public as a harmonious mixture of many different cultures, a unity in diversity. Food can be used to tell a story of how all these different people came together in one place, sharing culture while maintaining their distinctiveness.

There is another story though, which is not preoccupied with food as an ethnic marker, a symbol of cultural distinction. We like to think of food and cuisine as a distinct element of ethnic identity – after all we live in a world of "ethnic" restaurants, where our *only* knowledge of another culture may be through eating its food. But the connection between culture and food, while deep, is very malleable and changeable. It is not fixed by biology, or even early upbringing. Through our lives we can change our tastes, and give up one diet for another. Foodways like any other aspect of culture are never static. Even without the influence of other cultures, we would be eating and cooking differently from the generations that came before us.

The more complex story asks *why* food is sometimes such a potent symbol of ethnic identity, while at other times it is not. Why do we hold some dishes and tastes dear and cherish and maintain them as essential parts of our identity, while dropping others and forgetting that they were part of our past? Why is apple pie such an important symbol of North American identity, while syllabub and smoked eels are gone? It's not just that some things are kept and others lost, but there are

periods of time when food traditions are dropped, and other times when people search out the past and revive old dishes. And within a society at any one time, there will be some people busy giving up their old diet, and others circling the wagons to maintain and protect what they see as essential elements of their tradition. Why do some immigrant groups simply melt into a national culture, while others establish ethnic enclaves? And what happens in interethnic marriages?[1]

The central thing we learn from new and sophisticated studies of food and ethnicity is that tradition and memory are constantly being created anew, and that we cannot take for granted any connection between food and identity. Sometimes food traditions appear fixed and immovable; other times mutable and evanescent. So I am not going to take the diversity of ethnic food in Belize for granted, just because new immigrant cultures arrived. Instead I am going to emphasize the common situation that all the immigrants shared once they arrived in Belize, and the processes of borrowing, merging and creolization that led to the emergence of something we can call *Belizean*. For a reader who wants to know the specific ethnic cuisines of all the different groups that came to Belize, there are other cookbooks and histories. Here I am more concerned with what happened to all these traditions once they dropped into the cauldron of nineteenth-century colonial society.

That said, we need to know something about the ethnic diversification of the country. In 1800 Belize was a society of African slaves, free colored people and a few European colonists. The heterogeneous native people who lived on the Mosquito Shore of northern Honduras and Nicaragua were also frequent visitors to Belize, and many settled there. They were originally called *Waika* or *Waikna* and were later called *Miskito*; in fact we know very little about who they really were and how they affected local culture.[2]

The Garifuna (then called Black Caribs or Carib Indians), first settled the coastal areas of southern Belize at the very beginning of the nineteenth century, following their expulsion by the British from their homeland on the island of St Vincent in the Caribbean.[3] Today they continue to live mostly on the southern coast of the country, where they are favorite subjects for visiting anthropologists. They brought a distinct cuisine, which depends on plantains and cassava, mainly in the form of cassava bread, and ocean fish for protein. The traditional division of labor was that men fished, while women farmed and cooked. Food had a key role in many of the rituals of their indigenous religion, even after they became Catholics.

Initially the Garifuna came in small numbers and lived in their own villages fairly isolated from the rest of Belizean society. While some men and women did take jobs in the mahogany camps, most stayed on the coast and sold their fish and produce – especially plantains and yams – in town and Belize City markets. Though Garifuna were never more than 10 percent of the total population, their cuisine had an influence far beyond their numbers. Other Belizeans bought Garifuna food in the markets, and eventually adopted many Garifuna dishes as

their own, like cassava bread, home-salted dried fish and plantain dumplings (called *matilda foot* in Creole). The Garifuna preference for coconut oil and coconut milk for frying and stewing also became part of Creole cooking.

The largest group of people to enter Belize in the nineteenth century were refugees from the Caste Wars in Yucatan.[4] That complex conflict began in 1848 as a rebellion of Mayan villagers against government authority, the church and the economic domination of white Spanish-speaking Mestizos. Along the Belizean border different Mayan groups also fought with one another. Continued unrest and conflict eventually drove more than 20,000 Spanish- and Mayan-speaking people across the border into northern Belize where they settled around the town of Corozal and in villages strung along the Rio Hondo and the New River. This more than doubled the population of the territory. At about the same time, other groups of Mayan people were fleeing oppression in Guatemala, entering Belize from the west. Some of these people were probably descendants of communities that had been driven out of Belize in the 1700s. Further south, Kekchi and Mopan Maya also crossed the Guatemalan border to settle in Belize.[5]

At first the mahogany barons who dominated the local economy were hostile to immigrants, since the new villages were on lands they had claimed. They thought that the Indians" small farms would destroy valuable timber, and there were skirmishes between Maya soldiers and small detachments of British troops, who retaliated by burning Maya villages. Major conflict ended with the Maya attack on Orange Walk in 1872 when their leader was killed. Most of the communities, however, quickly settled down to subsistence farming of the familiar crops they had grown for hundreds or thousands of years.[6] Gradually Belize City merchants began to see these communities as a small market for imported goods, and a potential source of labor.

In the late eighteenth century some European settlers started small- and medium-scale sugar plantations in the northern districts; these were only economically possible because the Indians were willing to work for much lower wages than Creole mahogany workers.[7] They accepted lower pay because they were mostly self-sufficient in food; they survived with a homegrown diet based on corn, beans, vegetables and root crops, pork, chicken and river fish, so wages could be spent on manufactured tools and implements, rum, tobacco and other small luxuries. Nevertheless, because they had their own small farms, they were not fully exposed to a labor market. Like Indian peasant-farmers throughout Latin America, as long as they had land of their own to farm, they did not have to take full-time wage labor. And with such an abundance of workers, employers could get away with paying very low wages. In effect, as in so many parts of the developing world, by feeding themselves, these families were subsidizing export crops like sugar, cotton and coffee. Employers did not have to pay a "living wage," enough to keep a worker and his family fed and housed for a year.[8]

Belize developed two economies. In the north, west and south, Indian communities were part of a typical Central American pattern of low-waged labor and subsistence farming. Even with cheap Indian labor, most plantations for export crops like sugar and bananas failed, since communications were poor and other costs were high. Then in the middle of the country there was a Caribbean logging economy where workers got much higher pay. This was perhaps a living wage for men, but it was not enough to support their families, so the unemployed, women, children and the elderly still had to grow and buy some of their own food to make ends meet. It is not hard to see how and why the members of the two economies would be suspicious of and even hostile toward one another. Being willing to work for less, the Maya villagers put downward pressure on wages; black and Creole workers fought to keep Maya out of the mahogany camps, and employers grew to believe that the Maya were not "suited" for logging work. Maya and Mestizo workers had to stand by and watch Creole men earn much more money for work that looked easier than planting and cutting sugarcane.[9]

The two economies did not converge until the end of the nineteenth century with the rise of the *chicle* economy. Chicle is the boiled sap of the sapodilla tree, which became had become popular in the United States as a chewing gum in the 1870s.[10] Chicle workers spent months at a time in the rainforest tapping trees and boiling down the sap into blocks – they were paid by weight, rather than by wages. Most of the chicle gatherers were Maya, but some Creole men found places in the industry too.

Racism and the Ethnic Mix of the Colony

Sir Daniel Morris wrote, in 1883, that "The Belize Creoles, of African descent, but with an admixture of Spanish and Indian blood, are a strong, powerful race, admirably suited to the heavy labour of mahogany-cutting, which indeed they prefer to that of ordinary tillage. They are characterized by a random recklessness as regards the future … '[11] Here the ex-governor of the colony uses a familiar kind of British colonial racial classification. A few years before, the Colonial Secretary Henry Fowler started out a catalog of the "races" of Belize by saying "the Creole loves the free life of the woods …" He went on to list the diet, dress and personalities of each group.[12] A planter wrote in a local newspapers that "the Creole … hates plantation work and casts a longing look back on his old pursuits in the shady forest …" and "plantation work was not to the taste of the wood-cutter, whilst the wages he expected were out of all proportion to the return made in the shape of labour."[13]

From the British point of view, the world was neatly divided into "peoples" or "races," each characterized by a particular mode of dress, language, diet, personality and suitability for particular kinds of labor. This kind of "anthropology"

happily pigeonholed every person, determined who they were and how they behaved. In these beliefs they drew not just on prejudice and traditional ideas of blood and breeding, but also on European social and medical science. Food and diet were one of the main means of defining groups, so rations (and wages) were different for workers of each "race."[14]

The notion of fixed racial types led to concrete policies matching each group to jobs that supposedly suited their personalities and cultural backgrounds.[15] Thus, people considered "war-like" were drafted into the British colonial armies, while those considered pacific and hard working were sent to work in agriculture. In Belize, Creoles were drafted into the military, constabulary and logging. Garifuna were seen as good schoolteachers and nurses; light-skinned Creoles did clerical and supervisory work, and the Spanish- and Maya-speakers were farm laborers and sometimes shopkeepers (though Syrians, Lebanese and East Indians eventually dominated retailing). The prejudice included gender stereotypes, so Garifuna men were thought of as independent and intractable, while Garifuna women were hard working and reliable.

By the end of the nineteenth century the different ethnic groups were treated differently under the law when it came to labor, land ownership and taxation. This built on earlier regulations aimed at behavior that the elite found bothersome, like African drumming or street hawking by Garifuna women. The Garifuna, Mopan and Kekchi communities in the south were given "reservations" of land where they were supposed to regulate themselves and pay an annual tax. This was rationalized as protecting mahogany forests and stabilizing settlements, but it ended up segregating the ethnic groups from the rest of the country, and from each other. Over time it also justified a "hands off" policy. Hardly *benign* neglect, this meant that through the twentieth century these communities were denied basic services including medical care, roads, education, water and sanitation. To a large extent these policies helped create a so-called "primitive" region that continues to be underdeveloped and impoverished.

This is not to say that people were not complicit in forming themselves into ethnic communities. The society set up by British colonialism conferred advantages on ethnic communities, including some degree of self-governance, access to land and jobs, and some basic services, albeit stingy and paternalistic. Ethnic stereotypes reduced the competition between rural groups for resources: instead of a free-for-all, the British allocated each "race" a role in the economy. Resisting classification could leave you without privilege or protection; this is how an incredibly diverse society where intermarriage and mating were constant could still after four or five generations have the same ethnic categories.

This pattern of constantly sorting people into ethnic communities, some of which were exiled to reservations, had a dramatic effect on Belizean foodways. Ethnic communities developed and continued distinctive diets and cuisines that

were based on the foods they grew, hunted, fished and gathered from their own immediate environments. They all adopted some imported foods, particularly rice, flour, sugar, tea and a variety of alcoholic drinks, and incorporated them into their diets, usually as treats or additions rather than staples. While foreign foods entered the diet, foreign *dishes* did not. The reciprocal was also true. The ethnic cooking styles and dishes of rural Kekchi Mopan and Yucatee did not contribute very much to the active mixing and creolization that was taking place in Belize City and multiethnic towns, though some of the foods they grew, hunted, fished and raised found their way to urban markets. The Garifuna refused to stay on their reservations, moving into Belize City and the towns of Punta Gorda and Stann Creek, and in these settings, and areas of mixed Garifuna-Creole rural settlement, Garifuna cooking methods and dishes did enter the creolizing "stew pot."[16]

Growing Ethnic Diversity

Because most Maya people did not want to take permanent jobs in agriculture, and because most Creole men would not work for low wages, advocates of agriculture in Belize were constantly agitating to import workers. At various times small groups of Chinese and East Indian indentured workers were brought to Belize, as was the fashion in many other parts of the Caribbean.[17] The Chinese men mostly intermarried and effectively blended into Mayan and Creole culture. At least some East Indians arrived in family groups, and after working off their indentures or contracts on small sugar plantations in the south of the colony became independent small farmers and shopkeepers, or moved into the towns. Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian merchants also arrived at the end of the century, along with German Jews, helping Belize become a port for imports to neighboring Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras. In the 1850s there was a plan to import German and Belgian colonists; after the American Civil War some disgruntled confederates moved to the colony, though most did not stay for long.[18]

It is important not to read our modern ethnic categories back onto the nineteenth century. For example, in my own work I found the Kekchi people did not see themselves as a separate ethnic group until the 1970s. The term *Creole* has changed meaning several times in Belize. Once it was used to refer to middle-class people of mixed African and European descent, excluding the darker "negros" or Africans and the recent immigrant "whites" (called *buckras* by the rest of the population). The label was only extended to include all the English-speaking population, of whatever color, in the late nineteenth century, when it was used to draw a line between local people and the expatriate English bureaucrats, bankers and merchants who only came to make their fortunes and go home.[19] The people who entered northern Belize from Yucatan during and after the Caste War included everyone from monolingual Yucateco subsistence-farming village dwellers to

Spanish-speaking urban merchants.[20] As late as the 1960s there were villages where Yucateco was the primary language; but all are now called Mestizo or Maya-Mestizo.[21]

The modern categories have resulted from both the imposition of categories by government and educational authorities from above, and the efforts of people themselves to find common interest and to assert their rights. Nevertheless, ethnic categories remain fluid and ambiguous in Belize, where a single person might call him- or herself a Creole, a Belizean or a Mestizo depending on the situation and audience.

Table 5.1 Population figures for Belize City from 1863

National Origin	*Number*
Great Britain	101
British Honduras	3,460
Jamaica	175
Bahamas	208
Barbados	66
Demerara	14
St Kitts	10
Leeward Isles	2
Bay Islands	38
Mosquito Shore	28
Yucatan	255
Central American States	323
United States	21
South America	1
France	18
Russia	8
Germany	22
Spain	6
Portugal	1
Caymans	9
Italy	8
Belgium	1
[illegible}	7
Curacao	1
Africa	292
Not stated	1

Table 5.1 *(continued)*

Races and Admixtures	*Number*
Anglo Saxon	355
Anglo Honduran	16
Anglo African	1,250
Anglo American	7
Anglo Indian	293
Anglo Spanish	48
Anglo French	2
Anglo Carib	2
African	1,198
African English	700
African Spanish	91
African Indian	129
African Carib	46
Indian	88
? and African	159
Indian and Spanish	110
Indian and Carib	65
Spaniard	114
Spaniard and African	10
Spaniard and Indian	120
Spaniard and Carib	3
Carib	104
Carib and African	1
Carib and Indian	3
French	39
French and Indian	22
French and Spanish	6
French and Portuguese	3
Portuguese	20
Belgian	1
Dutch	7
Chinese	3
Italian	7
Not stated	14

Source: Leas (1863).

Note: Leas uses the term "Indian" to refer to people of Mayan and Waika ancestry; there were not at this time any East Indians. He says "In addition to 300 African soldiers in town … The population of the town of Belize numbers 5,068 souls, 2,232 of whom are male and 2,834 are female…"

A census of Belize City was assembled by the US Consul, Charles Leas, for one of his dispatches to the US Secretary of State in 1863, and it shows an amazingly diverse population (see Table 5.1). Leas has obviously struggled mightily to

classify the population using nineteenth-century ideas about race, but the result only shows how inadequate his terms are for a thoroughly mixed people.

"Rum, Music, Dancing, and Sexual Pleasures"

The ethnic diversity of Belize in the nineteenth century was crosscut and complicated by differences in wealth, education, social status and position, and even kinship, as powerful families began to emerge and dominate the colony.[22] Rather than describe how and why differences emerged, I want to simplify things a bit here by showing that there were really two major *registers* – two systems of code – for expressing the myriad social distinctions in the colony. These registers were arenas (or stages) where speech, dress, religion and many forms of public and private consumption communicated information about each person's position, abilities and aspirations.

The first register was what other anthropologists working in the Caribbean have called *respectability*, or what Miller calls *transcendence*.[23] The scale of values here comes straight from the middle classes of Europe and North America, and is familiar to anyone who has read about Victorian society. The ideal is a conjugal family of a hard-working man and a domestic, public-spirited wife, living in a highly decorated house, always well and fashionably dressed in public. Even private family meals were supposed to be elaborate and relatively formal, and public meals and entertainments depended on a complex set of manners, many of which involved highly diversified and specialized sets of objects, like cutlery, serving ware, cosmetics and toiletries.

Elsewhere I have argued that we can understand *respectability* as a merging of time, space and culture, part of what I call *colonial time*.[24] The past is merged with the spatial concept of isolation and the cultural dimension of tradition and custom. The three are treated as aspects of the same phenomenon. Time, distance and culture then become interchangeable ways to talk about how people and places are different. Primitive can mean *stuck in the past*, or *culturally different*, or *isolated and untouched*. Because time itself is directional and inexorable, movement in space and culture is given an inevitable and linear character. Ideas and goods move from the center to the periphery, and distant places gradually become closer and easier to reach. Isolated and primitive cultures progress and become more civilized with the passage of time.

Colonial time makes all kinds of cultural difference appear as natural aspects of isolation, backwardness and being stuck in the past. The poor are old-fashioned and closed to new ideas. Undeveloped areas are distant places dominated by unchanging tradition, timeless and isolated. The flow of time is melded with the idea of progress, which is promoted by anything that breaks down distance and local culture. Progress is movement in time from the unchanging past to the

dynamic future, in space from the isolated hinterland to the bustling city and in culture from static tradition to fashionable modernity. The promise of progress is of course material abundance, health, enlightenment and general well-being. You can stand in the way of progress if you want to remain stuck in the past, but then you will not get the prize that lies in the otherwise inevitable future.

In the colonial system, *colonial time* served many important purposes. It justified the role of administration, trade and education as agents of progress. And in the colonial system particular kinds of consumer goods like soap and shoes became emblems of progress.[25] Using these kinds of products was not a symbol of civilization, it *was itself* civilized behavior. The objects really did transform your body and make you civilized.

Goods and fashions from metropolitan centers measure *colonial time*; their diffusion outward into the colonial world was like a clock measuring the lag between "traditional backward" colonies and modern metropolis. Regardless of its practical uses, colonial material culture was essential in maintaining the flow of colonial time to the periphery. The objects themselves signified all the elements of colonial time, since they represented the inevitability of the future, the great geographic distance from their source and the cultural distinction and superiority of their makers. The demand for imports came to signify economic progress, even as the actual economies of the colonies fell into a crippling dependence on imported consumer goods.

It is no coincidence that so many of these objects were directly applied to (or entered into) the physical bodies of people in the colonies. People had both to show and directly experience civilization every day, by tightly lacing their unruly feet into hot leather shoes, draping their sweating bodies in heavy woolen suits, binding their necks with restrictive ties, wearing ungainly hats and multiple layers of delicate and fragile fabric. They had to pay exorbitant prices to eat tins of tasteless meat and pallid vegetables at stiff formal meals, and squeeze their bodies into cramped church pews for hours every Sunday. And they had to learn to enjoy and relish these things, to act as if it were a privilege and an honor to be allowed to partake in the fruits of empire. Clothing, washing and feeding the body were essential acts of civilization that sorted people in the colony not so much into discrete social classes, but along a scale from most civilized and modern to the lowest and rudest tribal people who lived in the jungle and "ate bush."[26]

While this rigid system of respectability structured colonial society, there was another set of values often called *reputation*, or in Miller's terms the *transient mode*. In colonial countries where there were strong indigenous civilizations and long histories of local cultural distinction, the encounter between local and colonial values and forms of consumption was dramatic. In places like British India or Indonesia, indigenous systems of value persisted right alongside those of the European colonial powers, leading to a complex interplay of accommodation,

creolization and resistance. But in Belize the indigenous culture provided shaky foundations on which to build an alternative set of values to those powerful ones emanating through the empire. Spanish- and Maya-speaking immigrants in the north drew on examples and values from neighboring republics, and to some extent were protected by a language barrier.

But among Creoles, as elsewhere in the Caribbean, *reputation* drew on African antecedents to value public performances of speech, music, dance, sexual display and sexual prowess. Rum shops, dances, sports and festivities of all kinds were common occasions for men and women to build and display reputations. Weddings, wakes and public holidays were celebrated with elaborate speeches, shared rounds of drinks and sexy dancing. As a frowning Gibbs succinctly said in 1883, "The labouring classes are much given to rum, music, dancing, and sexual pleasures."[27]

An indignant newspaper columnist said in 1840:

> Instead of the Christmas parties and regal Twelfth Night our children are greeted with congo, john canoes and indecent acts of lascivious girls perambulating and jigging through the streets like bears or monkeys, making hideous noises in the day and frightening sleep from our eyelids at night by their discordant orgies![28]

By far the most graphic nineteenth-century description of Afro-Caribbean performance comes from a newspaper article in 1890:

> The *Sambye* is a dance of African origin, patronized by the lower orders of the community. As a noise-producer, I defy any known combination of noise-makers, on either side of the Atlantic, to surpass the Sambye Theatre when in full swing. The orchestra is represented by two drums – a major and a minor – the *lakoonda* and the *cutting drum*. The chorus, of shrill-voiced females, with arms akimbo, stand in respectful attitudes, whilst the *prima dona*, accompanied by the minor instrument, screams the solo of a song pregnant with indecency. At its conclusion the chorus forms into a circle, and aided by a concatenation of indecorous canticles to which frenzied saltatory efforts – more remarkable for vigour than grace – lend assistance … These obscene orgies attract crowds of youths and maidens, whose morals are irredemiably [*sic*] corrupted by attendance at the Sambye …[29]

Sexuality in many forms was a central part of the culture of reputation, and was the one most often singled out for censure by the bastions of respectability. Women put a high value on fertility, and within limits increased their reputation by serial relationships with different men. Older women could acquire knowledge of healing herbs, midwifery and *obeah* (witchcraft), and become the center of large households full of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Men exhibited sexuality with multiple partners, children by several different women and bragged about

both among their "crew" at the rum shop.[30] They also enhanced their stature through their dangerous work and in sports.

It is tempting to see the culture of reputation as purely local, and that of respectability as foreign. We can also easily depict reputation as a practice of opposition and resistance to a dominating colonial power. Others have suggested that reputation is more of a masculine value, while respectability is feminine. And one can also see reputation as a value of the young, who gradually give it up and become more respectable as they get older. There is an element of truth to all of these ideas, but none of them really captures the complex interplay between the two values. It was (and is) possible, for example, for a man or a woman to have both reputation and respectability at the same time (though it is certainly easier for a man). A man may be an elder in his church and a leader of the business community, but also have a working-class mistress and children, a mastery of the "deep" Creole spoken among the poor and a reputation as a drinker and horse-player.

And it is also possible for both sets of values to appear in the same public events. The funeral orations described by Abrahams, for example, include elaborate vocabulary and formalities like those of European preachers and officials, which are on the edge of mimicry and satire. Olwig describes formal tea parties and church services on the island of Nevis that were sometimes taken over by performances of reputation in oratory, gossip, music and dance. She notes the ways that reputation and respectability were intermingled in practice, rather than simply opposed to each other. Her crucial observation is that many of the elements of the culture of reputation are also found among the working classes in Europe, suggesting that we are really dealing here with a system of *class* distinctions common to Europe and many of its colonies.[31]

What does all this mean for the consumption of nineteenth-century Belizeans? Certainly, achieving respectability in the colony demanded very close attention to consumption, drawing careful lessons from the practices of European upper classes and fashions. The burden of respectability fell heaviest on the small middle class, and those members of the working class who wanted to be upwardly mobile. They really had to watch their step and display the kind of "hyper-correct" behavior noted earlier. From very limited financial resources, they had to buy a constant stream of expensive imports. Their social lives revolved around their workplace, churches, schools and the Masonic lodges and civic groups that grew in great profusion towards the end of the century. Here they attended balls and dinner dances in formal clothes, dancing European dances, drinking weak punch and eating ham and turkey buffets.[32] For most of the year, these people had to scrupulously avoid "eating bush," and they made a display of disliking many local foods. In the 1980s elderly middle-class people told me about their childhood households where game and fresh fish were never eaten. Like the cheap and abundant lobsters, catfish and crabs,

they were shunned as the foods of the poor. Only at Christmas time could the middle class loosen up, drink rum and dance, but even then their major activity was an annual blitz of house cleaning and refurbishing that emptied local stores of paint, furniture and flooring.

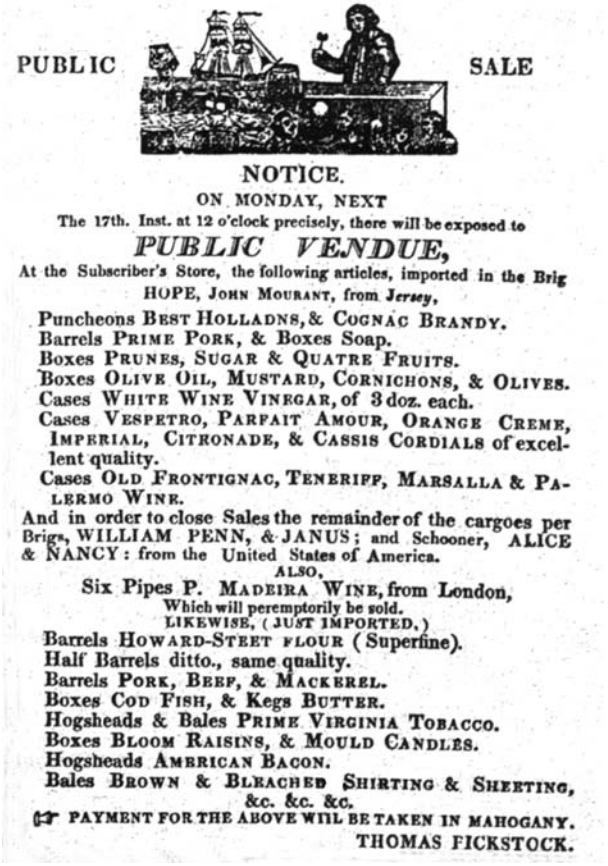
Respectability demanded a constant flow of imports, and so did building reputation. While the daily diet of the poor was "plantain and salt fish" supplemented by "ground food" (root crops), any festive occasion demanded imported luxuries, especially drinks.[33] Christmas meant fine imported clothes and many other luxuries. Spending every penny to treat friends and relatives to expensive wines, liquor and foods was essential in building reputation. Both value systems worked within colonial time; imports always trump local products, new is better than old, and expensive things are always better than cheap ones. To echo Olwig's argument about reputation, there is nothing particularly local or resistant about it. The display of reputation *and* equally the achievement of respectability both require imported goods, sometimes even the same goods.

Luxuries and Rewards

The complex operation of all these social distinctions, as well as colonial cultural values, the local system of taxation and Belize's economic position in the British Empire all fueled growing imports. While the Baymen may have been happy with some rough cloth, a barrel of rum and their pork and peas, their descendants had a much richer set of tastes and options. Regular figures on the amounts of goods imported were not recorded until 1880, so for most of the century we have to rely on the advertisements in Belize City newspapers.[34]

In the early nineteenth century most advertisements announced the arrival of a ship, and listed the contents of its cargo. Local merchants were basically the agents for ship owners, selling as much of the cargo as possible and buying wood and other exports on the ship owners' behalf. They often advertised that they would take mahogany in payment for goods. Most advertisements (see Figure 5.1) include barrels of codfish, pork, beef, mackerel, flour and the coarse sheeting and osnaburg cloth that fed and clothed slaves. The cargos for sale in Figure 5.2 show something of the range of luxury foods and liquors for sale in Belize at the time. Bristol tripe was a specialty of that port; it was pickled in vinegar and spices to keep for long periods, and like many "gourmet" food products of the time it was packed in small wooden casks called *firkins*.[35]

While cargos originated in England or ports in the USA, they were assembled in an urban marketplace that offered goods from all over the world. The buyers of cargos for the Belize trade probably chose what was abundant and cheap at the time of loading the ship. For example, smoked and salted tongues were a common luxury food all over the British Empire. While Figure 5.2 does not tell us where



PUBLIC SALE

NOTICE.

ON MONDAY, NEXT

The 17th. Inst. at 12 o'clock precisely, there will be exposed to

PUBLIC VENDUE,

At the Subscriber's Store, the following articles, imported in the Brig HOPE, JOHN MOURANT, from *Jersey*,

Puncheons BEST HOLLADNS, & COGNAC BRANDY.
Barrels PRIME PORK, & Boxes Soap.
Boxes PRUNES, SUGAR & QUATRE FRUITS.
Boxes OLIVE OIL, MUSTARD, CORNICHONS, & OLIVES.
Cases WHITE WINE VINEGAR, of 3 doz. each.
Cases VESPETRO, PARFAIT AMOUR, ORANGE CREME, IMPERIAL, CITRONADE, & CASSIS CORDIALS of excellent quality.
Cases OLD FRONTIGNAC, TENERIFF, MARSALLA & PALERMO WINE.

And in order to close Sales the remainder of the cargoes per Brigs, WILLIAM PENN, & JANUS; and Schooner, ALICE & NANCY: from the United States of America.

ALSO,

Six Pipes P. MADEIRA WINE, from London,
Which will peremptorily be sold.

LIKEWISE, (JUST IMPORTED,)

Barrels HOWARD-STEET FLOUR (Superfine).
Half Barrels ditto., same quality.
Barrels PORK, BEEF, & MACKEREL.
Boxes COD FISH, & Kegs BUTTER.
Hogsheads & Bales PRIME VIRGINIA TOBACCO.
Boxes BLOOM RAISINS, & MOULD CANDLES.
Hogsheads AMERICAN BACON.
Bales BROWN & BLEACHED SHIRTING & SHEETING, &c. &c. &c.

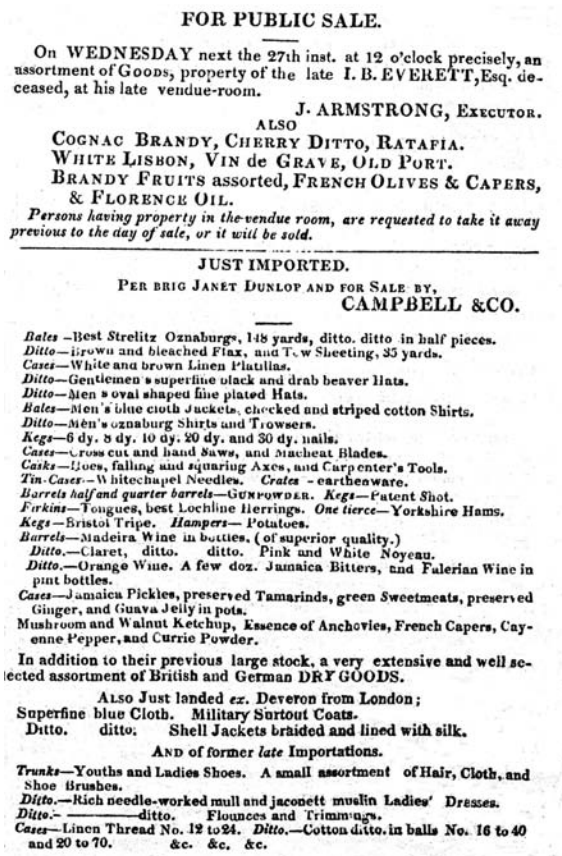
☞ PAYMENT FOR THE ABOVE WILL BE TAKEN IN MAHOGANY.

THOMAS FICKSTOCK.

Figure 5.1 1826 advertisement for the contents of the sailing ship *Hope*. Source: *Honduras Gazette and Commercial Advertiser*, July 15, 1826.

the tongues came from, in the 1840s reindeer tongues came through the Baltic trade from Sweden. In the 1870s Belize ate buffalo tongues from the slaughter of bison on the American Great Plains. Later lamb tongues came from New Zealand, and in the twentieth century Danish pig tongues arrived. In the Figure 5.2 cargo, Falerian wine came from the Italian coast north of Naples, cayenne pepper from British Guyana, "currie" powder from India, madeira from the Spanish island of the same name and a variety of preserves and condiments originating in Jamaica, which like all these goods went to England before being shipped back to the Caribbean.[36]

The presence of fresh vegetables like potatoes and onions (packed in wicker hampers) shows that the brig "Janet" probably came directly from England; even then they were probably not very fresh. The top advertisement includes wines and



FOR PUBLIC SALE.

On WEDNESDAY next the 27th inst. at 12 o'clock precisely, an assortment of Goods, property of the late I. B. EVERETT, Esq. deceased, at his late vendue-room.

J. ARMSTRONG, EXECUTOR.

ALSO

COGNAC BRANDY, CHERRY DITTO, RATAFIA.
WHITE LISBON, VIN de GRAVE, OLD PORT.
BRANDY FRUITS assorted, FRENCH OLIVES & CAPERS, & FLORENCE OIL.

Persons having property in the vendue room, are requested to take it away previous to the day of sale, or it will be sold.

JUST IMPORTED.

PER BRIG JANET DUNLOP AND FOR SALE BY,
CAMPBELL &CO.

Bales—Best Strelitz Oznaburgs, 148 yards, ditto. ditto in half pieces.
Ditto—Brown and bleached Flax, and Tow Sheeting, 35 yards.
Cases—White and brown Linen Platillas.
Ditto—Gentlemen's superfine black and drab beaver Hats.
Ditto—Men's oval shaped fine plated Hats.
Bales—Men's blue cloth Jackets, checked and striped cotton Shirts.
Ditto—Men's oznaburg Shirts and Trowsers.
Kegs—6 dy. 8 dy. 10 dy. 20 dy. and 30 dy. nails.
Cases—Cross cut and hand Saws, and Mackeat Blades.
Casks—Hoes, falling and squaring Axes, and Carpenter's Tools.
Tin-Cases—Whitechapel Needles. *Crates*—earthenware.
Barrels half and quarter barrels—GUNPOWDER. *Kegs*—Patent Shot.
Firkins—Tongues, best Lochline Herrings. *One tierce*—Yorkshire Hams.
Kegs—Bristol Tripe. *Hampers*—Potatoes.
Barrels—Madeira Wine in bottles, (of superior quality.)
Ditto.—Claret, ditto. ditto. Pink and White Noyeau.
Ditto.—Orange Wine. A few doz. Jamaica Bitters, and Falerian Wine in pint bottles.
Cases—Jamaica Pickles, preserved Tamarinds, green Sweetmeats, preserved Ginger, and Guava Jelly in pots.
Mushroom and Walnut Ketchup, Essence of Anchovies, French Capers, Cayenne Pepper, and Currie Powder.

In addition to their previous large stock, a very extensive and well selected assortment of British and German DRY GOODS.

ALSO Just landed *ex.* Deveron from London;
Superfine blue Cloth. Military Surtout Coats.
Ditto. ditto. Shell Jackets braided and lined with silk.

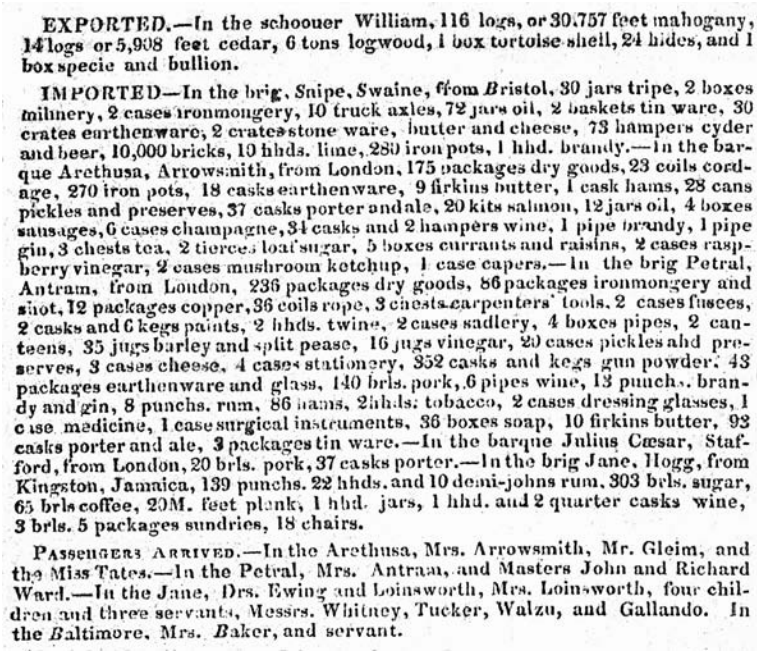
AND of former *late* Importations.

Trunks—Youths and Ladies Shoes. A small assortment of Hair, Cloth, and Shoe Brushes.
Ditto.—Rich needle-worked mull and jaconett muslin Ladies' Dresses.
Ditto.—————ditto. Flounces and Trimmings.
Cases—Linen Thread No. 12 to 24. *Ditto.*—Cotton ditto. in balls No. 16 to 40 and 20 to 70. &c. &c. &c.

Figure 5.2 Advertisements for two sales in 1826 in Belize City.
Source: *Honduras Gazette and Colonial Advertiser*, December 23, 1826.

foods from France, Spain and Italy (Florence oil is a particularly high grade of olive oil), suggesting that the ship that delivered them may have stopped at one of the many British merchant houses in Lisbon on its way to the Caribbean. Ratafia is a French beverage made from mixing grape juice and brandy, now known as Pineau des Charentes. Overall, the cosmopolitan nature of consumption in Belize at this time was extraordinary.

Some indication of the sheer quantity of goods being imported at Belize City in 1826 can be seen in the "Shipping Information" columns of the weekly newspaper. Figure 5.3 shows harbor traffic for the week December 23–30; this would have been a high-volume time since many of these goods were intended for the annual Christmas bacchanal. One intriguing aspect of this list is the variety of packaging, part of a general pattern in world trade. While bulk goods traveled in



EXPORTED.—In the schooner William, 116 logs, or 30,757 feet mahogany, 14 logs or 5,908 feet cedar, 6 tons logwood, 1 box tortoise shell, 24 hides, and 1 box specie and bullion.

IMPORTED—In the brig, *Snipe*, Swaine, from *Bristol*, 30 jars tripe, 2 boxes milinery, 2 cases ironmongery, 10 truck axles, 72 jars oil, 2 baskets tin ware, 30 crates earthenware, 2 crates stone ware, butter and cheese, 73 hampers cyder and beer, 10,000 bricks, 10 hhds. lime, 280 iron pots, 1 hhd. brandy.—In the barque Arethusa, Arrowsmith, from London, 175 packages dry goods, 23 coils cordage, 270 iron pots, 18 casks earthenware, 9 firkins butter, 1 cask hams, 28 cans pickles and preserves, 37 casks porter and ale, 20 kits salmon, 12 jars oil, 4 boxes sausages, 6 cases champagne, 34 casks and 2 hampers wine, 1 pipe brandy, 1 pipe gin, 3 chests tea, 2 tierces loaf sugar, 5 boxes currants and raisins, 2 cases raspberry vinegar, 2 cases mushroom ketchup, 1 case capers.—In the brig Petral, Antram, from London, 236 packages dry goods, 86 packages ironmongery and shot, 12 packages copper, 36 coils rope, 3 chests carpenters' tools, 2 cases fusees, 2 casks and 6 kegs paints, 2 hhds. twine, 2 cases sadlery, 4 boxes pipes, 2 canteens, 35 jugs barley and split pease, 16 jugs vinegar, 20 cases pickles and preserves, 3 cases cheese, 4 cases stationery, 352 casks and kegs gun powder, 43 packages earthenware and glass, 140 brls. pork, 6 pipes wine, 13 punchs. brandy and gin, 8 punchs. rum, 86 hams, 2hhds. tobacco, 2 cases dressing glasses, 1 case medicine, 1 case surgical instruments, 36 boxes soap, 10 firkins butter, 93 casks porter and ale, 3 packages tin ware.—In the barque Julius Cæsar, Stafford, from London, 20 brls. pork, 37 casks porter.—In the brig Jane, Hogg, from Kingston, Jamaica, 139 punchs. 22 hhds. and 10 demi-johns rum, 303 brls. sugar, 65 brls coffee, 20M. feet plank, 1 hhd. jars, 1 hhd. and 2 quarter casks wine, 3 brls. 5 packages sundries, 18 chairs.

PASSENGERS ARRIVED.—In the Arethusa, Mrs. Arrowsmith, Mr. Gleim, and the Miss Tates.—In the Petral, Mrs. Antram, and Masters John and Richard Ward.—In the Jane, Drs. Ewing and Loinsworth, Mrs. Loinsworth, four children and three servants, Messrs. Whitney, Tucker, Walzu, and Gallando. In the *Baltimore*, Mrs. *Baker*, and servant.

Figure 5.3 Shipping information, listing incoming and outgoing ships in the port, for the week of December 22–29, 1826.
Source: *Honduras Gazette and Colonial Advertiser*, December 30, 1826.

wooden barrels – hogsheads, pipes and firkins – barley and split peas arrive in jugs, presumably of glass or earthenware. The salmon is packed in "kits," tankard-shaped wooden tubs with a solid wood lid. Cooking oil is in glass or ceramic jars, tea in chests and some of the more expensive wines and liquors are prepacked in bottles instead of bulk kegs; vinegar, oil, ketchup and other condiments were also shipped in bottles. It is especially interesting to see pickles and preserves in cans in 1826, only fourteen years after the first commercial canning factory was opened in England. All these containers were on a one-way trip, thus explaining why Belize was called a city "built on mahogany chips and rum bottles."[37] As the century went on, fewer and fewer goods were packed in bulk (to be repackaged locally reusing bags, boxes and bottles), and more was prepackaged in cans, bottles and jars.

It is no surprise to see so much ironwork and other manufactures on these lists, since there was no local industry to produce them. On the other hand, a lot of basic construction material like bricks, pine lumber and shingles (cedar shakes for roofing) were imported, particularly from New England, though these could easily have been made in the colony. Initially it appears absurd that Belize should be

exporting mahogany logs to Europe and importing white pine boards from New England. From an economist's point of view, this just shows that Belize had a *comparative advantage* in mahogany production, so they made more money exporting mahogany and importing pine than they would had they tried to produce both in Belize. But this holds investment and technology constant. In fact it would have been quite cheap to cut pine boards, split shingles and burn brick in Belize, and even to export some of these goods (since Belize has pine and clay). There were plenty of underemployed and partially employed workers to cut the wood too. But there was no sawmill in Belize until 1868, and Belize City merchants or landowners continued to import lumber long after local equivalents were available.[38] This meant that even mundane objects like shingles became, in some sense, imported luxuries accessible only to those with enough money.

Promoting Imports

Belize City advertisements gradually changed in content and format, revealing much about the changing commercial system of the nineteenth century. For

Figure 5.4 Advertisement for whisky, bottled specially to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Battle of St George's Cay in 1798, when slaves and masters reputedly fought the Spanish "shoulder to shoulder."
Source: *Colonial Guardian*, November 8, 1898.

example, 1830s advertisements show each cargo being handled as a separate consignment from a ship owner to a local merchant. By the 1840s Belize merchants had much closer ties with commercial houses abroad, and they were ordering particular goods and paying for them in advance or with loans from metropolitan banks. They had contracts with purchasing agents in New York and London who could assemble a cargo for a percentage fee (usually 5 percent). In the 1860s merchants set up direct relationships with manufacturers, becoming the "sole agents" for a particular line of products, and presumably buying some of those products on credit from the manufacturer. The arrival of a ship was still a major event though, and goods are still advertised as "just arrived" and "just received." In advertisements like Figure 5.4, the metropolitan manufacturer sent the plate for printing the ad to the Belize merchant to appear in the local paper. This is an unusual case where the London merchant bottled a batch of whisky to the order of the Belize store, to commemorate the 1798 battle of St George's Cay, the last Spanish attack on Belize.

Beginning in the 1860s some manufacturers, particularly makers of patent medicines in New York State, began to buy their own advertisements in the local papers, probably through traveling commercial agents and salesmen.[39] By the end of the century, branded products from England and the USA dominated advertising. Most of these were the pioneer "global brands" like Fussell's Milk or Beck's Beer.

Once they began buying directly from commercial enterprises in Europe and the USA, Belize merchants had to keep most of their cash and liquid assets in European and North American banks. Their whole financial orientation was turned to the home country, and because they didn't keep or *invest* their money in Belize they did not want or need a local bank, so there wasn't one in the colony until 1902. Many merchant houses had started out producing mahogany and other products for export, but by the 1860s a series of contractions in the mahogany market (and especially the great global depression of the late 1870s) led to a string of bankruptcies, and the consolidation of the mahogany business in the hands of just two foreign-owned companies.

By 1900 the local merchants were no more than import agents for global brands; they made little effort to build or expand local markets, and they had no interest in local products. Productive industries were completely separated from the marketing system for food and other consumer goods. One system evolved to speed export products out of the country, and the other worked in reverse, to import goods and distribute them in Belize City stores, and through branches and clients in the bigger towns, who sold them to village shops.[40] The flow of goods did not connect towns or villages in Belize to each other, but to the merchant houses in Belize City. This meant that a farmer in northern Orange Walk could only sell beans to a consumer in nearby Corozal by physically carrying the beans to Corozal

Figure 5.5 Fussell's milk advertisement, produced in the UK and printed locally. This was one of the first global companies selling canned condensed milk, pioneering the use of premiums and prizes to build brand loyalty.
Source: *Colonial Guardian*, April 6, 1907.

and selling door-to-door. Otherwise the beans had to be sold to a Belize City merchant, who would carry them to Belize City, and only *then* ship them to a Corozal merchant. Once all the local transport costs were paid, it was usually more convenient for the Belize City merchant to buy beans in bulk from an agent in New York or New Orleans, who would send them on credit along with the rest of a large shipment straight to the port.

This whole commercial system frustrated attempts to build local food production beyond household subsistence farming and street vending. The food connection exposes fundamental conflicts between the goals of making colonies economically self-sufficient and capable of funding their own government and services, and at the same time maintaining cultural and political connections to the home country. This contradiction fueled a cycle in which every increase in the amount of exports led to increases in demand for imported food. While the prices of raw exports like sugar and lumber stagnated, new packaged and processed foods

grew increasingly expensive. New tastes became the key indicators of progress and civilization, which could never stand still, despite the dire financial consequences that ended up starving the colony of the capital which could have been used to expand or diversify the economy.

Global Food in Barrels and Bottles

The quantities of food imported into Belize fluctuated as the price of mahogany rose and fell. Judging by the period after 1880, there was usually a trade surplus of about BH$500,000, on exports varying between about BH$1.5 and BH$2.5 million (Belize dollars were roughly the same value as US$ in this period). Imports for local consumption begin a steady rise toward the end of the century, but the balance of trade did not shift permanently in the other direction until after the Second World War.

Table 5.2 Imports into Belize related to population

Date	*Population*	*Total Imports (BZ$)*	*Total Imports ($ per capita)*	*Domestic Imports ($ per capita)*	*All Cereals (lbs per capita)*	*Distilled Liquor (Gall per capita)*	*Meat, (lbs per capita)*	*Tea & Coffee (lbs per capita)*	*Refined Sugar (lbs per capita)*
1824	4,107					12.6		7.9	
1827	4,643	1,915,615	412.58						
1845	9,809	1,333,865	135.98						
1850	10,900					4.0		3.0	
1860	25,635	1,004,345	39.18						
1865	25,172	1,053,375	41.84						
1870	24,710	921,685	37.30						
1875	26,082	876,605	33.61						
1880	27,542	1,186,620	43.08	24.83		0.9		2.6	1.3
1886	29,863	1,179,813	39.51	27.46	138.8	1.3	29.9	3.4	2.3
1890	31,471	1,829,382	58.13	40.48	125.3	1.7	53.0	5.1	2.7
1895	33,353	1,341,406	40.22	24.89		1.3		2.9	4.3
1900	37,479	1,198,772	31.99	23.36	132.0	0.9	31.1	4.2	1.9
1905	38,900	1,876,560	48.24	26.03	144.9	0.8	51.9	4.0	2.8
1910	40,458	2,819,217	69.68	36.75	107.8	1.2	45.8	4.2	6.1
1915	44,928	2,148,955	47.83	26.85	159.4	0.6	25.3	4.1	18.0

Source: Almanacs and the annual Blue Books and other reports published by the local government
Note: Blanks indicate missing data. For some years, population is extrapolated from earlier and later censuses. Until 1880 it is impossible to subtract the amount of imports that were reexported to other countries, to arrive at the amount that were kept for domestic use. After 1880 all per capita amounts are domestic imports.

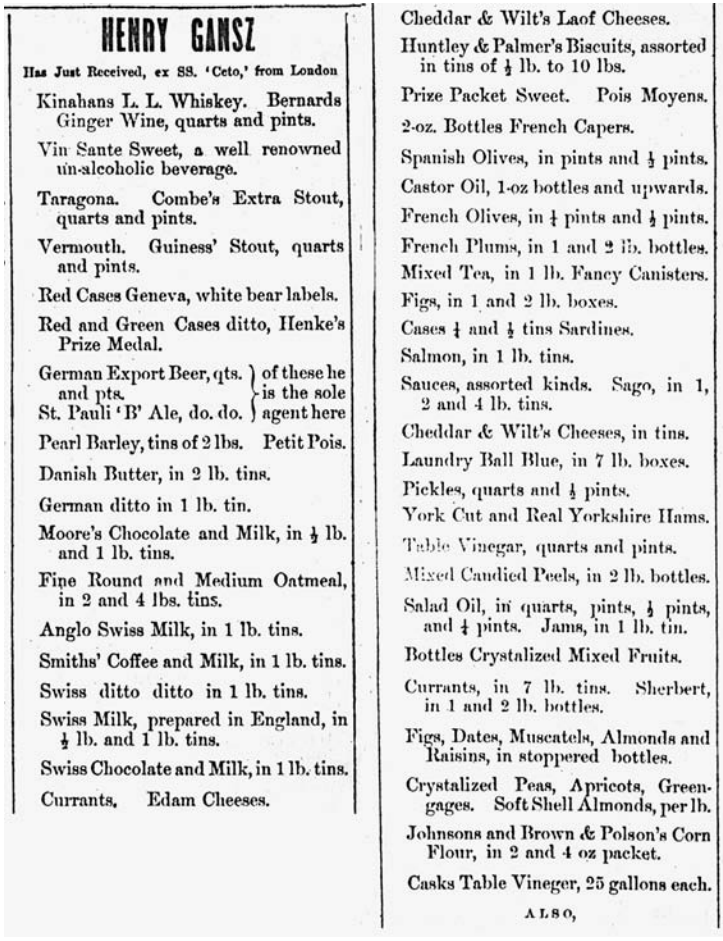
Table 5.2 shows that, in 1880, the first year with good records, the country was consuming about BH$25 worth of imports per person (including children and the

elderly), which may not seem like much, until we note that wages for mahogany workers were less than BH$0.50 cents a day, and flour was about BH$0.02 a pound in bulk.[41] In 1886 each person in the Colony consumed about 139 lbs (63 kg) of imported cereals (of which two-thirds were flour, and the rest rice and other grains), 30 lbs (14 kg) of preserved meats, a gallon (4 l) of imported hard liquor, 3 lbs (1.2 kg) of coffee and tea, and 3 lbs (1.2 kg) of refined imported sugar. Considering that a good deal of liquor, coffee and sugar was smuggled through the porous borders with neighboring countries, and that the per capita figures don't account for more than half of the population being children, these are very substantial amounts. Throughout the nineteenth century, food accounted for an average of 60 percent of all imports by value.

Many other imported foods don't appear in any documents; they entered the country in small boats that landed freely among thousands of islands and hundreds of miles of unguarded coast. Because the Belize currency was backed by the British government with gold, farmers and fisherfolk up and down the Caribbean coast brought foodstuffs to sell in local markets. Since wages in Belize were four or five times higher than in neighboring countries, Belizeans always found Mexican and Honduran cattle, poultry and corn cheaper than anything local. They even bought basic processed foods like cassava bread and dried fish from as far away as Nicaragua.[42]

Despite their frequent lamentations about the poor state of local agriculture, government officials and community leaders had few practical means to cut down on food imports. A rise in import duty on food could cause rioting among the poor. Besides, importing was a major source of income for some of the wealthiest local families, and import duties were the main source of government revenues (and continued to be so, right up to the 1990s). Import duties raised over 90 percent of all government revenue in 1860. Throughout the history of Belize, this one fact accounts for much of the lassitude in the government's effort to reduce the amount of imports. Unwilling to offend the powerful owners of huge tracts of land by increasing property and land taxes, the only other option for the government was to depend on import duties.[43]

Variety is another way to think about the flood of food imports. The number of different goods increased over the course of the century, as did the number of brands of each product. As early as 1839 the same merchants offered both English and American flour, pork and beef. Over time there are more kinds of cheese, patent medicine and wine available, but the basic list of import commodities remains remarkably similar right up through the late 1880s. The list from 1882 (Figure 5.6) shows products that would not have been out of place forty years previously. When regular steamships to New Orleans began in the late 1870s, and refrigerated shipping arrived shortly thereafter (a consequence of the growing export trade in bananas), many more fresh fruits, vegetables and meats were



HENRY GANSZ

Has Just Received, ex SS. 'Ceto,' from London

Kinahans L. L. Whiskey. Bernards Ginger Wine, quarts and pints.

Vin Sante Sweet, a well renowned un-alcoholic beverage.

Taragona. Combe's Extra Stout, quarts and pints.

Vermouth. Guiness' Stout, quarts and pints.

Red Cases Geneva, white bear labels.

Red and Green Cases ditto, Henke's Prize Medal.

German Export Beer, qts. and pts. } of these he
St. Pauli 'B' Ale, do. do. } is the sole agent here

Pearl Barley, tins of 2 lbs. Petit Pois.

Danish Butter, in 2 lb. tins.

German ditto in 1 lb. tin.

Moore's Chocolate and Milk, in ½ lb. and 1 lb. tins.

Fine Round and Medium Oatmeal, in 2 and 4 lbs. tins.

Anglo Swiss Milk, in 1 lb. tins.

Smiths' Coffee and Milk, in 1 lb. tins.

Swiss ditto ditto in 1 lb. tins.

Swiss Milk, prepared in England, in ½ lb. and 1 lb. tins.

Swiss Chocolate and Milk, in 1 lb. tins.

Currants. Edam Cheeses.

Cheddar & Wilt's Laof Cheeses.

Huntley & Palmer's Biscuits, assorted in tins of ½ lb. to 10 lbs.

Prize Packet Sweet. Pois Moyens.

2-oz. Bottles French Capers.

Spanish Olives, in pints and ½ pints.

Castor Oil, 1-oz bottles and upwards.

French Olives, in ¼ pints and ½ pints.

French Plums, in 1 and 2 lb. bottles.

Mixed Tea, in 1 lb. Fancy Canisters.

Figs, in 1 and 2 lb. boxes.

Cases ¼ and ½ tins Sardines.

Salmon, in 1 lb. tins.

Sauces, assorted kinds. Sago, in 1, 2 and 4 lb. tins.

Cheddar & Wilt's Cheeses, in tins.

Laundry Ball Blue, in 7 lb. boxes.

Pickles, quarts and ½ pints.

York Cut and Real Yorkshire Hams.

Table Vinegar, quarts and pints.

Mixed Candied Peels, in 2 lb. bottles.

Salad Oil, in quarts, pints, ½ pints, and ¼ pints. Jams, in 1 lb. tin.

Bottles Crystalized Mixed Fruits.

Currants, in 7 lb. tins. Sherbert, in 1 and 2 lb. bottles.

Figs, Dates, Muscatels, Almonds and Raisins, in stoppered bottles.

Crystalized Peas, Apricots, Greengages. Soft Shell Almonds, per lb.

Johnsons and Brown & Polson's Corn Flour, in 2 and 4 oz packet.

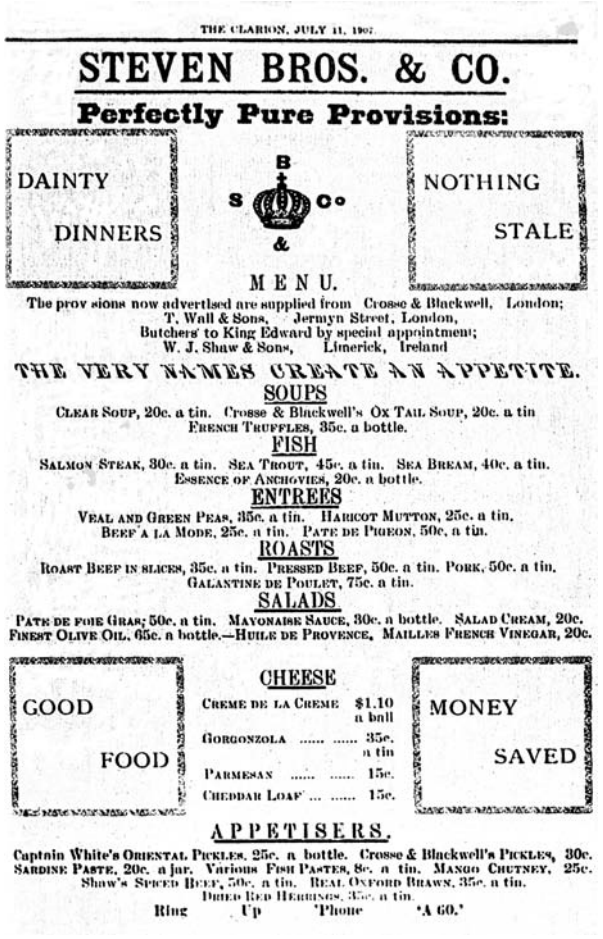
Casks Table Vineger, 25 gallons each.

ALSO,

Figure 5.6 Henry Gansz advertising a growing variety of foods, many named by country of origin.
Source: *Colonial Guardian*, June 24, 1882

imported. In the 1880s merchants began to advertise fresh oysters from New Orleans, and, especially at Christmas time, fresh fruits and vegetables including apples, pears, apricots, grapes, beets, turnips, cabbages and even lettuce.

In the mid 1800s, England began to develop an industry that produced and preserved dishes that had come to stand for the "home country" in the minds of the hundreds of thousands of British expatriates living in distant parts of the empire. How and why particular foods became the objects of nostalgia is beyond my scope here, though it is a fascinating topic. Condiments like mushroom ketchup or salad crème could be poured over a local meat or vegetable to make it taste more British.[44]



THE CLARION, JULY 11, 1907.

STEVEN BROS. & CO.

Perfectly Pure Provisions:

DAINTY DINNERS

B S & Co

NOTHING STALE

MENU.

The provisions now advertised are supplied from Crosse & Blackwell, London; T. Wall & Sons, Jermyn Street, London, Butchers to King Edward by special appointment; W. J. Shaw & Sons, Limerick, Ireland

THE VERY NAMES CREATE AN APPETITE.

SOUPS

CLEAR SOUP, 20c. a tin. Crosse & Blackwell's OX TAIL SOUP, 20c. a tin
FRENCH TRUFFLES, 35c. a bottle.

FISH

SALMON STEAK, 30c. a tin. SEA TROUT, 45c. a tin. SEA BREAM, 40c. a tin.
ESSENCE OF ANCHOVIES, 20c. a bottle.

ENTREES

VEAL AND GREEN PEAS, 35c. a tin. HARICOT MUTTON, 25c. a tin.
BEEF A LA MODE, 25c. a tin. PATE DE PIGEON, 50c. a tin.

ROASTS

ROAST BEEF IN SLICES, 35c. a tin. PRESSED BEEF, 50c. a tin. PORK, 50c. a tin.
GALANTINE DE POULET, 75c. a tin.

SALADS

PATE DE FOIE GRAS; 50c. a tin. MAYONAISE SAUCE, 30c. a bottle. SALAD CREAM, 20c.
FINEST OLIVE OIL, 65c. a bottle.—HUILE DE PROVENCE, MAILLES FRENCH VINEGAR, 20c.

GOOD FOOD

CHEESE

CREME DE LA CREME	$1.10 a ball
GORGONZOLA	35c. a tin
PARMESAN	15c.
CHEDDAR LOAF	15c.

MONEY SAVED

APPETISERS.

Captain White's ORIENTAL PICKLES, 25c. a bottle. Crosse & Blackwell's PICKLES, 30c.
SARDINE PASTE, 20c. a jar. Various FISH PASTES, 8c. a tin. MANGO CHUTNEY, 25c.
Shaw's SPICED BEEF, 50c. a tin. REAL OXFORD BRAWN, 35c. a tin.
DRIED RED HERRINGS, 35c. a tin.

Ring Up 'Phone 'A 60.'

Figure 5.7 Christmas "menu" advertisement from Steven Brothers, showing cooked dishes in cans.
Source: *The Clarion*, July 11, 1907.

As the art of canning progressed through the nineteenth century, the range of these products went far beyond sauces and preserved meats and vegetables to include cooked dishes, real British meals in a can. This was more than "tastes like home"; it really was from "home." An advertisement from 1907 takes the form of a menu, showing that at this time it was possible to put together entire meals of prepared canned dishes, including oxtail soup and Oxford brawn (a speciality known as head cheese in the US). The British Empire's taste for Indian exotica is apparent in the oriental pickles and mango chutney. Many of the dishes follow the long-standing British fashion for French cuisine, or at least for French names.

Other advertisements from the 1890s and early 1900s include such very British brands, dishes and foods as Scottish haggis, Christmas cakes and puddings, roast pheasant breast, Bovril beef extract, Horlicks malted milk, ginger beer and Guinness stout. The tendency toward "home in a can" produced such absurdities as canned British lobster sent to a country where the waters swarmed with the fresh sort.[45] Australians buried under a plague of rabbits exported them whole in cans to Britain, from whence some found their way onward to Belize, advertised as an exotic delicacy (though rabbits could be raised in Belize). Sago starch, extracted from palm trees in Malaysia, traveled to England for packaging and then onward to Belize, where it served exactly the same function in making puddings as cheap local cassava starch.

Equally absurd was importing tapioca in boxes from England. Tapioca is no more than granules of cassava, a simple product made in Belizean villages. Instead of using the local product, cassava starch was extracted somewhere distant in the empire, then cleaned and packaged in England. The transformation of colonial products into finished foods in England was often accompanied by a name change like that from the raw substance called *yuca* or *cassava* in Belize to processed tapioca (a name originally from Tupi, a South American native language). This renaming cuts the producer out of the picture, and along with the packaging, magically makes the product seem "British," thereby making it appear rational to import something like tapioca into a country where the substance is abundant.[46]

Another form of consumption that came to be equated with civilization in the nineteenth century, especially in the USA, revolved around ice. Cooled drinks, and especially ice cream, were treats that held many connotations. In the early 1860s, Belize City developed as a trading center for Union and Confederate sides in the American Civil War (sometimes Union ships traded munitions for Confederate cotton), and the frequent and rapid sailings to American ports brought the first bulk shipments of ice, packed in sawdust in large wooden barrels. An editorial in *The Colonist* argued that ice had health-giving properties for white people, and went on rapturously:

> What luscious visions this subject engenders in the thoughts of those who know the benefits it bestows, and to how many of our thirsty deliquescing friends of *position* does it afford the glowing satisfaction, that they can cool their mouths and quench their thirst with additional gusto …[47]

In 1866 an advertiser could claim "During this hot season, you all need ICE – Ice Chests can be had at reasonable price."[48] As a local taste developed for iced drinks and ice cream, the expense and inefficiency of importing ice led to a rancorous public debate. While many people had agitated, throughout the century, for government to take measures to promote local agriculture, the authorities did little. But this problem of ice moved the governor and the legislative council to an

extended debate in 1883 over the prospect of subsidizing the construction of a local ice factory. Proponents argued that with such a small local market, a privately owned factory would never be a viable business, but they said ice was required for health and civilization. The governor dismissed the proposal, on the grounds that the government did not have the money, and that anyway ice was no more than a luxury.[49] Nothing was done.

Shortly thereafter several shops opened that served ice cream and iced drinks, using imported ice and canned milk. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s churches and civic groups held ice-cream socials and parties as a way to raise money, though they had to contend with an unreliable supply of ice. Finally in 1897 the private Belize Ice and Distilled Water Works opened.[50]

This example shows how many local food and consumer industries developed. Once there was a local market for an imported product, a local entrepreneur could import the equipment and raw materials to make a "local" version. In most cases this just meant transferring the final stages of manufacturing and packaging to Belize. So one could import hard soap in kegs, cut it up into blocks and wrap them in imported paper with a locally printed label (though the printing equipment, inks and fuel were all imported). Bakeries did essentially the same thing with imported ovens, flour and yeast.

This kind of import substitution made sense for generic products that were packaged in heavy and fragile glass bottles. During the 1880s the mass importation of bottled soda water, lemonade, ginger beer and seltzer started to decline as the "Ice Cream Saloon" began to produce its own using local water, with imported machines, bottles and syrups: "Sparkling Kola" in 1898 and Coca-Cola in 1907. Several breweries tried to make local beer in the late nineteenth century, but none was successful for another fifty years. The irony was that while this ostensibly made Belize more modern and self-sufficient, capable of supplying its own needs, in reality it created a continuing demand for ever-more complex imports, not only of equipment, fuel, bottles and processed ingredients, but also for new tastes and the expertise to satisfy them.

During the 1890s a few farms tried to advertise local products. Ads in March and April of 1895 offer "Native Corn, Sugar and Frejoles [misspelled Spanish for beans] from North," and exhort readers to "Patronize your own country! Now selling Sugar from five estates in Toledo." The brief success of the Cramer coffee estate in Toledo is reflected in 1888 advertisements for "Native Coffee."[51] The illustrated advertisement (Figure 5.8) from James Brodie & Co. (still in business) reflects something of the mixed message from these efforts at import substitution. On the one hand, there is the appeal to support local industry; on the other hand, only the presence of an actual European tailor confers quality on the local industry! While sugar survived as an export crop, local coffee disappeared with the First World War and did not reappear until the 1990s.

Our Tailoring Department
is under the Supervision of an expert British Cutter; we employ only competent workmen, and our prices cannot be beat.
WHY ORDER YOUR CLOTHING FROM ENGLAND?
Support "LOCAL INDUSTRY" and make your Selections from J. B. & Co!!
We have just opened a large assortment of Trouserings, Indigo Serges, Coatings, Worsteds, Tweeds etc.eto.
Patterns on application and quotations given for any garment.
There is no possible shadow of doubt that J. B. & Co supply their Customers with fashionable, perfect fitting and wellmade garments, at exceptionally low prices.
James Brodie & Co.

Figure 5.8 Brodie's store advertises "local industry," though the tailor and cloth, not to mention the styles and tools, all come from the home country.
Source: *Colonial Guardian*, April 1, 1899.

Branding and Packaging

It should be clear by now that richer nineteenth-century Belizeans were deeply concerned with the quality of their food and drink. At the beginning of the century when food was shipped in bulk barrels, adulteration, poor quality and spoilage were constant problems, and with so many small suppliers it was very difficult to anticipate the quality of an order before it arrived. In a place like Belize a merchant could easily be stuck with many barrels of spoiled or low-quality flour, salt meat or wine.

In the early nineteenth century, merchants tried to guarantee the quality of their goods by reference to their place of origin or packing. They built on a long European tradition of local specialization in foods and wines. Cheeses were named for their place of origin (Parmesan, Cheddar), but soon the place names became too generic, referring only to a style of preparation or set of ingredients, like Holland gin and Scottish herring. Yorkshire hams, for example, were famous for their quality in the early nineteenth century, but by mid century similar ham was being produced in many places, and retailers in Belize distinguished between "York hams" and "genuine Yorkshire hams." Madeira, Port and Tenerife were all named for places of origin, but eventually they became styles of wine produced in many places.

As geographic place lost its power to guarantee quality, modern corporate brands began to appear, at first linked to the personal names of the manufacturers (usually Quakers), who thereby offered their reputation, their *face* as it were, to establish a bond of trust with consumers. Because the fear of adulteration and spoilage drove the rise of brands in the nineteenth century, sealed packaging became increasingly important, and the companies or agents that created and filled the packages became as prominent sometimes more so than the manufacturer, grower or point of origin.

The first branded product I have been able to find in the surviving Belizean newspapers is "R. S. Murray's tea biscuits and Rusks" in 1839.[52] Thereafter, the number of name-branded goods increased slowly, mostly for specialty goods where taste was a key issue, like beer and whisky, and then in patent medicines, where doctors and experts appeared on the labels. The authenticity and quality of brands were bolstered, in mid century, by trade shows and exhibitions where medals and awards were given for quality. In advertisements in distant places like Belize, gold medals at London exhibitions, and royal warrants ('By appointment to HRH') carried weight. An 1867 advertisement for Christian Moerlein beer illustrates a complex trademark as a guarantee of quality, and then adds a series of medals won at international expositions, and to cap it off several personal testimonials from prominent celebrities.

At the end of the century locational branding reappeared in a new form. As Figure 5.6 shows, many products were identified by their *national* origin – American cheese, German butter, Swiss milk, Spanish olives, etc. – and these displace the old city and regional names. Smart companies jumped on this trend, and started corporate brands like "Anglo-Swiss," "Franco-American" and "Colonial." The increasing national militarism of the period was reflected in the imagery of advertising. An advertisement for Natura-Milk (Figure 5.9) is an especially graphic example, but there were many others, and the packages of biscuits, tobacco and coffee bore similar images of triumphant white people and defeated, cowering or exaggerated natives.

Natura-Milk Has Conquered Br. Honduras.
NATURA-MILK
LION-BRAND
Last month we received our first shipment of NATURA MILK.
In a very short time the Public found out that NATURA MILK is the best fresh Milk ever introduced to this country and the demand was greater than we were able to supply
We Have Just Received A Fresh Shipment
and invite those, who have not tried this excellent milk as yet to make a trial.
We intend to have NATURA MILK constantly in stock, in Quart, Pint and ½ Pint tins and would thank you to book your orders in time, to avoid disappointments.
NATURA MILK is very nourishing, it is an article of diet far surpassing any other milk preparations, PARTICULARLY IN CASES OF ILLNESS as ENTERIC and MALARIA FEVER, etc. and also for CONVALESCENTS.
Your Babies Will Thrive On Natura-Milk.

Figure 5.9 An example of the more militant variety of colonial advertising, as Natura-Milk conquers British Honduras. Even at this early date, manufacturers were trying to replace breast-feeding with a more expensive and less healthy alternative.
Source: *The Clarion*, August 11, 1910.

Despite all this attention to packaging and branding, adulteration was still a problem. Newspapers continued to give advice on identifying imported goods, and to report on the frequent food-quality scandals in England and the USA.[53]

> When it is remembered that the adulteration of such articles as butter, cheese and milk is very common and that our main supply of these articles is derived from the States, where their adulteration is according to authorities practiced to an enormous extent, 50 million pounds of butter adulterated and made heavier by not properly squeezing out the milk and

> water and by mixing with fats being produced yearly in that country, it being also a common practice to adulterate cheese with lard and cottonseed oil, we should think that some action aught to be taken with a view to ascertain the amount of adulteration of food that goes on here, as complaints on this head are very numerous and loud.[54]

Dining Out

In the next chapter I will discuss the ways that Creole cuisine developed as "home cooking" during the nineteenth century. Food that was served in public and on formal occasions was another matter entirely – and it continues to be so in Belize. One of the things that most impressed me about Belizean food in the 1970s and 1980s was the sharp difference between what was served in restaurants and at public events, and the kinds of things people ate daily at home, or for family celebrations. After my years working in Belize as an archeologist, mainly eating the narrow range of Belizean dishes served in restaurants, I was astounded at the richness and variety of dishes eaten in homes when I began to do ethnographic work. I was also surprised that so many people were embarrassed about the food they ate at home, as if only the public, fancy foods could really be called a cuisine worthy of visitors or guests. This sharp dividing line between public and private food is easily visible in nineteenth-century Belize as well, and can be traced to Victorian attitudes about formality and public dining.

Belize was undoubtedly full of small bars and rum shops during the nineteenth century, many of which probably served quick meals, and I am sure there were many houses and market stalls where one could go to buy lunch. Even today it is very common for people to sell prepared foods from their houses, and to give children buckets and baskets of *panades*, *dukunu*, *creole bread* and *tamales* to sell on the street and door-to-door.[55] But these working-class public meals were entirely invisible and went unreported in any newspapers or travelers' accounts. Instead, public dining centered on European or North American dishes in restaurants and hotels, and at balls and weddings.

There were small hotels and guesthouses in Belize City in the early nineteenth century, but larger and more formal hotels did not open until the influx of visitors and prospective settlers right after the American Civil War. An American woman who stayed in one of these hotels in 1880 reported that in the dining room there was a large and extensive menu of dishes, none of which was actually available (she also complained that the beds were as hard as mahogany boards!).[56] A "resort" hotel and bathing beach opened on St George's Cay in 1888, offering dinners.[57] In 1890 a downtown saloon and billiard hall opened serving lunch daily, and the Albert Street Restaurant, the first in the colony, opened in 1896.[58]

These hotels and restaurants advertised their modernity ("electric bells in every room!") and their cosmopolitan atmosphere, presenting themselves as outposts of

Groom's Dinner at Wagner's Hotel

Stuffed Olives Anchovies on Toast
Hotch Potch Soup
Fried Oysters
French Fried Potatoes
Potato Salad
Roast Turkey … Celery Sauce
Green Peas
Boiled Ham … Mashed Potatoes
Asparagus Tips
Celery Cheese
Ice Cream, Cakes, Fruit
Coffee

Mr. Wilkins Departure for England Dinner at Wagner's Hotel

Anchovies on Toast
Clear Turtle Soup
Boiled Fish Oyster Sauce
Potatos French Fried
Potato Salad
Roast Turkey Green Peas
Boiled Ham Cream Potatos
Broiled Tenderloin Beef Steak
Mushroom Sauce Asparagus Tips
Rum Omlet
Ice Cream Cake
Cheese Coffee
Cigars

Dinners at Departure of the Chief Justice

International Hotel:

Spratts on Toast A La Mode
Soup: Puree of Tomatoes

Fish Cutlets Tarter Sauce
Cream Tomatoes

Chicken a la Creole String Beans
Salad
Roast Veal Green Peas Beet Salad

Turkey Ham Cranberry
Apple Sauce Potato Salad
Ice Cream A La Sol Mixed Cakes.
Cheese Coffee Crackers Fruits Pineapple Celery Candy Biscuits Pickles

The Volunteer Officer's Mess:

Caviar
Sherry Tomato Soup
Champagne
Fillets of Snapper
Whiskey and Soda
Port
Fillets of Beef with Mushrooms
Roast Turkey and Sausages
Port Tipsy Cake Ice Cream
Sherry
Liqueurs
Savoury
Coffee

Figure 5.10 Menus for formal dinners in Belize City, showing conservative imported menus, 1902–1912.
Sources: *The Clarion*, December 4, 1902, June 5, 1902 and January 4, 1912.

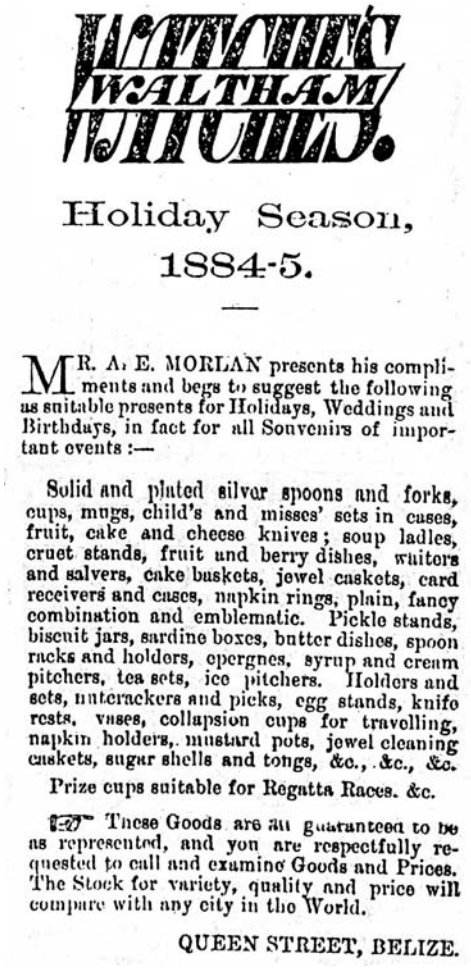
metropolitan civilization. A typical advertisement reads "Visitors to the colony and others will find at WAGNER'S HOTEL all that can be desired in a first class residential hotel … A French cook superintends the preparation of food, and Meals served in the French, Spanish, Italian, or American Styles … "[59] The International Hotel bragged of its "First Class Cuisine. The meat, vegetables, and fruit are imported from the U.S.A … The hotel has an unlimited supply of ice and American lager and English beer, several kinds of Aerated and Mineral waters and at least two brands of Champagne are always to be had cold …"[60]

Large hotel dinners were held when colonial officials or members of prominent local families left the colony. For a time in the early 1900s it was fashionable to publish the menus in the newspaper, giving us a brief but vivid window onto the period. Figure 5.10 shows just how important it was to serve entirely European dishes, even though most of the ingredients were from cans. With the exception of turtle soup, any local food, like snapper or fresh beef, had to have a familiar European name, and it was often "civilized" with a European sauce. Similar sets of dishes, particularly ham and turkey, appeared on the menu at banquets, balls, public parties and dinner dances.

One particularly intriguing menu was published in the *Catholic Church Monthly* in 1895, reporting on the annual New Year's dinner for the inmates of the poor-house and asylum prepared by the "Catholic ladies and friends of the poor." The menu included rice and beans**,** roast beef, chicken, ham and potatoes, custard pudding, sweet biscuits, candies, tobaccos and pipes, a handkerchief for the women and cigars for the men.[61] This is the first published reference to *rice and beans*, now considered the national dish of Belize (see the next chapter for more on the "promotion" of this dish).

As world trade in grains increased toward the end of the nineteenth century, the amounts of rice imported into Belize rose rapidly. Merchants also began to import large quantities of beans from the United States, favoring the imported red kidney bean over the black turtle bean that had been cultivated in Belize for well over 3,000 years. It was no great stretch on the part of local cooks to combine the two in a dish, as they had long been cooked together in the southern United States and elsewhere in the Caribbean. The important point here is that far from being a *local* dish prepared from foods grown in Belize, rice and beans began as an *imported* food, something cosmopolitan, suitable for a special occasion or celebration.

We can judge something of how elaborately the tables at banquets and dinners for the rich were set by looking at the advertisements for tablewares, and the lists of wedding presents for elite couples that were, for a time, published in local newspapers. Figure 5.11 shows an extraordinary list of imported tablewares from 1885, including items like pickle stands, epergnes (centerpiece flower or fruit holders), and sardine boxes, which today are known only to silver collectors. When the



WALTHAM WATCHES.

Holiday Season,
1884-5.

MR. A. E. MORLAN presents his compliments and begs to suggest the following as suitable presents for Holidays, Weddings and Birthdays, in fact for all Souvenirs of important events :—

Solid and plated silver spoons and forks, cups, mugs, child's and misses' sets in cases, fruit, cake and cheese knives; soup ladles, cruet stands, fruit and berry dishes, waiters and salvers, cake baskets, jewel caskets, card receivers and cases, napkin rings, plain, fancy combination and emblematic. Pickle stands, biscuit jars, sardine boxes, butter dishes, spoon racks and holders, epergnes, syrup and cream pitchers, tea sets, ice pitchers. Holders and sets, nutcrackers and picks, egg stands, knife rests, vases, collapsion cups for travelling, napkin holders, mustard pots, jewel cleaning caskets, sugar shells and tongs, &c., &c., &c.

Prize cups suitable for Regatta Races. &c.

☞ These Goods are all guaranteed to be as represented, and you are respectfully requested to call and examine Goods and Prices. The Stock for variety, quality and price will compare with any city in the World.

QUEEN STREET, BELIZE.

Figure 5.11 Waltham's watches advertisement, showing a large variety of imported tablewares and serving implements.
Source: *Colonial Guardian*, January 3, 1885.

assistant medical officer, William Woodman, married Margaret Orio, the daughter of a wealthy merchant of Mexican ancestry, their wedding gifts included:

> Japanese tea set, French china tea service, silver preserve dishes, China biscuit box, box of perfume, afternoon cake stand, silver egg stand, silver jam pot, silver epergne, silver entree dish, silver spoons and sugar tongs, water carafe and glasses, silver sardine box, Punkah lamp, Embroidered tea cloth, three flower vases, sugar basin, jam pot, silver pen rack, silver salad bowl, china tea service, flower epergne, silver cake basket, silver egg set, silver sugar basin … dessert plates, coffee pot, tea set, silver

> preserve dish, a sheep [!], glass dishes, glass and enamel flower vases … a turkey and wedding cake, glass fruit dish, oak biscuit box … tea cosey [*sic*], silver butter dish, glass fruit stands, silver fruit epergne, silver cruet stand … pair of lace tea cloths … china fruit dishes, silver coffee set, silver pickle fork …[62]

This profusion of items was considered necessary for entertaining guests at dinner, and we would hardly expect them to have been used to serve anything recognizably local. It is important to place these performances of European dining in context. We are not dealing here with a "survival" of an earlier European dining tradition that had always been present in Belize. The whole point of these dinners was that they were *modern*, and they required careful study and tremendous amounts of time, attention and money to carry off. As an aspect of colonial time, they transported the guests temporarily out of Belize, giving them at least a brief physical experience of travel in time and space from the backwoods of Belize to the seat of civilization. Of course, for all their efforts, they could never actually catch up, and recent visitors from England or New York would probably have a laugh at what they would see as a poor imitation of the "real thing" at home.

This intense interest in European food may have been a source of frustration to high-ranking local Creoles who had not lived in England or America. During the late Victorian period many of them did send their children abroad for education, but local Creoles began to perceive themselves as being at odds with the British expatriates and visitors who dominated the government and technical occupations like medicine, law and education. The friction led to a much clearer sense of Belizean Creoles as a social group with their own interests and an emerging national consciousness. For the time being, however, this growing sense of Creole identity was not expressed in public, as it was in many other colonies, by a resurgence of interest in national and "ethnic" cooking and cuisine. Nevertheless, as I will show in the next chapter, beneath the European upper crust, something new and unique was cooking.

The beginnings of Creole alienation from the mother country, such a necessary step in the transition from colony to country, was clearly phrased by an anonymous poet, who wrote in 1902:

> My Country
>
> Once the home of the "Baymen" true,
> Now the *nest* of the favoured few;
> I speak of my country, yes of thee,
> Bleeding land of poverty …

Once the fairest in the world,
But from that position hurled,
By Officials come to dwell …

Life's a burden, gloomy, sad,
Strangers come to take your bread;
with good places they are fed,
While *Creoles* may pine and groan,
They get the meat, while *you* get the bone …[63]

Recipe: Salt Fish and Plantains

1 lb (450 g) salt fish (salted cod or similar) soaked in hot water for 2 hours
2 oz (55 g) flour
3 tablespoons (45 ml) coconut oil, vegetable oil or shortening
12 oz can (355 ml) coconut milk (or fresh if available)
2 bay leaves
3 whole allspice seeds
2–3 unripe plantains or green bananas, peeled and cut into 2-in (5-cm) sections

Drain the saltfish – if it is still hard and salty, boil for 10 minutes in fresh water to soften further.

In a large heavy frying pan or the bottom of a large pot, make a roux by frying the flour in the oil until medium brown – not quite as dark as the shell of a ripe coconut. Remove and cool.

Put the coconut milk in the pan or pot with the cooled roux. Add the allspice and bay leaf; you can also put in up to ½ lb of okra, a chopped small onion, a few cocoyams and garlic if you wish. Add the plantain or banana and bring to a steady simmer until they are beginning to get soft.

Add the fish – you may need to add water or another 12 oz (355 ml) of coconut milk at this point.

Cook for another 15 minutes and serve in bowls.

–6–

Global Ingredients and Local Products

1990 import statistics:

342,343 lbs of canned corned beef, costing US$337,000
489,504 lbs of canned vienna sausages, US$503,500
2,109,618 lbs of other canned meat, US$1,858,500
Which works out to 16 lbs (7.25 kg) of canned meat per Belizean, costing US$14.66 (wholesale), or 64¼ lbs (115 gm) servings.[1]

"The National Dish"

1½ Caribs	2½ Mestizas (Indian and Spanish)
4 Creoles	Also other Nationalities
1 Mayan	(All sizes, shapes and shades)[2]

In this chapter I will formalize a distinction made in the previous chapter, taken from the work of Jack Goody, between *cooking* and *cuisine*.[3] I am drawing on social science theories that distinguish two very different meanings for the word *culture*. On the one hand, culture can be habitual and taken for granted, unconscious and unself-conscious. In this sense, culture is very close to the classic anthropological definition of "learned and shared practices," the things people assume and believe by virtue of deep unconscious learning. On the other hand, culture can be seen as explicit, self-conscious, symbolic and performative; something to be manipulated, argued about, contested and debated. By this definition, culture is something continuously produced, and is often a matter of public debate.[4]

The two definitions offer a useful way to think about the relationship between food and culture. Food is obviously something ruled by deeply unconscious tastes and habits. People can tell you what they like to eat, but they are often inarticulate in explaining why; it is just something they are "used to," or that "tastes good." In many anthropological studies we find that food is fundamentally and deeply symbolic at a visceral level; it is a taken-for-granted part of the everyday order of life, measuring the seasons, the ages of a life, embodying a whole set of values about right and wrong.[5] In more recent work, food is portrayed as a tool in making and

remaking public culture, a way that people actively assert their common identity or their differences. Typically, we are told that food is manipulated in order to promote ethnicity, nationalism or assimilation, as in cases where some local food becomes a symbol of resistance, an assertion of local identity against globalization or a unified Europe.[6]

Here I will use the term *cooking* to refer to the unconscious and unreflective form of preparing and eating food, and *cuisine* for the overt and conscious aspect of food. It is tempting to see these as polar types, but I think it is dangerous to think of one as "artificial," and the other as "authentic," for they are equally rooted in experience and daily life. Table 6.1 maps out some common polarities that get associated with cooking and cuisine. One could treat them as if they were two separate strata of culture; so that beneath the surface official banquet version of cuisine, there is a deeper layer of real unself-conscious home cooking. Or you can treat one as the ancient and primordial authentic practice, and the other as some artificial product of modernity (or even playful postmodernity). Others say that the strata are divided by class: the daily subsistence diet at one pole, and the lavish meals of the elite at the other. And then there is the popular perception in Belize and many other places that puts "real" local foods at one end, and the foreign or global at the other.[7] This analysis is shared by the activists who form the *slow food* movement, who want to save venerable traditions of local handmade food to resist the vast global blender.

Table 6.1 Some polarities of food culture

Lived Practice	*Public Performance*
Cooking	*Cuisine*
Meals at Home	Public Banquet
Ancient Tradition	Modern Artifice
Working Class	Elite Class
Regional	National
Local	Cosmopolitan

Note: While I find it useful to make the distinction between cooking and cuisine, it is a mistake to connect it to the other polarities.

Of course there is some element of truth to all these distinctions. Each has proponents who are working hard to keep the poles apart, doing what Latour calls "the work of purification."[8] The problem with using these polarities is common in the social sciences – an overlap between *analytical* and *folk* concepts. Folk concepts are the cultural distinctions people use to understand *their own* world. Getting at these is the work of ethnography. Others have noted that many folk concepts are escapees from academia (what I call *feral* ideas) that have themselves become globalized, spread around the world so that they are widely shared, but often misunderstood or

misused.[9] Analytical concepts are those developed to take apart and understand phenomena in the world from a stance that at least tries to be distant from a single culture; in the case of anthropology we use analytical concepts to understand folk concepts.[10]

What does this have to do with cuisine and cooking? From an analytical standpoint I do not see these as polar opposites; in fact things move constantly from one to another. So, for instance, what appears today as everyday cooking (a dish like rice and beans) was once foreign cuisine. Dishes or foods that were once an unconscious part of every meal – the habanero pepper sauce on every Belizean dining table, for example – are brought forward as public and political symbols of national cuisine, and quickly become mass-produced items for sale to tourists.

From my analytical perspective, cooking and cuisine are two aspects of every food culture, which can never be separated from one another, and one should never be seen as more real or authentic. As Pilcher shows in his study of the origins of Mexican food, national cuisine emerges from the interaction between practice and performance, domestic and public, low and high, local and foreign, rather than from the dominance of one over the other.[11]

But if we go back to late nineteenth-century Belize, the common folk model held that cuisine and cooking were *entirely different* and completely separate. The departure dinners in the last chapter show us a colony where cuisine was a public performance of British civilization; where "real" culture came in a can. The appearance of the cuisine at banquets was officially the only thing that mattered; while the daily cooking that took place in each and every house was invisible. This was the folk model. But from an analytical standpoint, the situation was much more complex and interesting. The folk model, however, had a very strong influence on the kind of evidence we have about cooking. This is tremendously frustrating because all the most interesting mixing, adapting and changing that led to the emergence of what we recognize today as Belizean cuisine took place in invisible kitchens outside the historical record. The creative processes and the hard work of thousands of invisible cooks forged something quite unique.

In Belizean families, everyday eating involved compliments, arguments, complaints, lessons, debates, experiments and recipe exchanges, as each developed their own family food traditions. At meals and public events people tasted each others' cooking and compared, adapted, adopted and imitated recipes and dishes. Individual cooks developed public reputations for the quality of their food. These are the kinds of processes that lead to the emergence of a tradition of cooking – we can observe them in the present as ethnographers, but we can only find their traces in the historical record.

I will therefore have to use the tools of an archeological detective to reconstruct what was cooking in Belizean kitchens during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We know what came before, in the cooking of mahogany

camps, buccaneers, expatriates and immigrant ethnic groups. We know what came afterward, and we have a fair amount of information on the ingredients of the diet from records of imports and local agriculture. There are a few scattered references to actual dishes in newspapers and the accounts of visitors and travelers. I will put these all together with a general analytical model of how cooking traditions mix and change over time, add some speculation and extrapolation and we will see what emerges.

Making and Mixing Local Food

The central analytical concept that scholars use to understand how Caribbean culture formed from diverse ingredients is *creolization*. Originally the term Creole applied to locally born whites to distinguish them from immigrants. For Dampier in the seventeenth century it simply meant a European born in the New World. By the 1860s in much of the West Indies, creole meant a local mixture of people, culture and language. Today as a *folk* term it has many meanings and uses, and in Belize it can refer to an ethnic group descended from Africans and Europeans, to the common language spoken by most Belizeans, a shared national style of cooking and the general process of mixing things up.

As an *analytical* term, creole was first applied to a kind of new language formed in situations of cultural contact. Creole languages were sometimes denigrated as simplified and even "broken" forms of "older" languages, and many in the Caribbean still see their local creole language as inferior to "proper" English. More recent linguistic work does not support the idea that Caribbean creole languages are inferior to other languages. We know that modern languages like English and Italian themselves began as creoles spoken in situations where many cultures were in contact with each other.[12]

When Caribbean islands began to achieve independence after 1962, local intellectuals began to use the concept of creolization to think about their own nascent national cultures. In contrast to the notion of "plural society," which saw Caribbean countries as a mélange of separate ethnic groups and nationalities, cultural nationalists of the Independence period argued that the Caribbean had a syncretic new culture of its own, not just fragments or remnants from elsewhere. They portrayed Creole culture as a growing, creative force, a product of conflict that could unify nations fragmented by colonial racism. This optimism is now tarnished by the persistence of separate ethnic cultures that have seriously divided Caribbean countries like Trinidad and Guyana.[13] As in Belize today, "Creole" is sometimes used to refer to the blending of cultures into a national mixture, and at other times it more specifically labels the African-descended part of the national culture, in opposition to other ethnic groups. This blends analytical and folk usage, which allows a lot of flexibility, at the expense of precision.

The idea of creolization was never confined to the Caribbean, and it has been used by scholars to talk about mixed cultures in other parts of the world. In the 1980s, partially because of prominent Caribbean scholars working in England like Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall, the idea that creolization is characteristic of modernity or postmodernity became popular in cultural studies and other social sciences. In this context creolization means *a process of global cultural mixture*, a product of increasing flows of ideas, migrants, money and tourists. As Sheller points out, this notion of blending has replaced a much more political idea of creolization in historical research on the Caribbean.[14] Scholars like Bolland and Burton tell us that creolization was hardly a smooth blending process. Instead it was *work*, compounded of appropriation and resistance, full of ambivalence and ambiguity and, to use Bolland's phrase, "a process of contention."[15]

This wide range of research shows how creolization works in areas like language, dance, music and religion. But when it comes to thinking about food, most people who write about creolization still fall into the "effortless mixing" metaphor. Just take a bunch of different people with different cuisines and put them together in a country, and out comes a tasty and exotic Creole mixture! But who put them together, and how? How did cooks take the motley foods such as leftover cuts of meat, preserved and salted imports and African garden crops and end up with something that is now eaten with pride and the deep sense of happiness and wholeness conveyed by Austin Clarke in his culinary memoir *Pig Tails and Breadfruit*?

> Oh My God! When you survey the contents of that pot, after you have taken off the lid and open-she-up, such a waft of historical and cultural goodness going blow in your face! Such a strong reminder from the slave days …[16]

Creoles in the Kitchen

Given the small size of British Honduras (the population did not exceed 50,000 until 1931), and the amount of interethnic mating, it would be surprising if there were not a lot of sharing of specific recipes and cooking techniques during the late colonial period. Hired working-class Creole, Garifuna and Hispanic women ran the kitchens in all the elite households and many in the respectable middle class as well. While these women cooked European dishes for their employers, they did not always follow orders to the letter, either from ignorance, lack of raw materials or their own resistance and unwillingness to give up what they had learned at home.

Something of this tension between employers and cooks emerges from this 1863 description of the Belize City market.

> The ladies and mistresses of houses never go to Market, and rarely go shopping, but send their servants for what they require, the former fact perhaps accounts for the

> miserable supply of vegetables as they care for nothing beyond yams and plantains, and they uninform [*sic*] by reports on their return that nothing else in the way can be had, not being willing either to educate their appetites or exercise their culinary abilities to conform to the tastes and wishes of their employers.[17]

Thirty-four years later, another visitor noted that every house among the wealthier classes had a kitchen out back with a hired cook, who was considered an indispensable part of the household, adding that "Here the cook reigns, and she is a despot of the most pronounced type."[18] There was obviously a class tension between cooks and their employers.

Part of the differences between cooks and their employers may have revolved around issues of health. Schools in the nineteenth century taught a wide variety of ideas about the relationship between food and health, and Europeans firmly believed that in the tropics they had to watch their diet closely to avoid yellow fever and other deadly diseases. Their food taboos and ideas about health were quite different from those of rural and working-class people in Belize, judging from the kinds of folk medicine that survive today.[19]

The upper classes who employed cooks followed a very English set of ideas about preserving health that paid particularly close attention to temperature, time of day, drafts and the "lightness" or "heaviness" of particular foods. In 1863 Consul Leas recommended that "Fruits such as oranges and bananas should … be avoided in the after part of the day."[20] A newspaper columnist opined "Speaking generally of our dinners out here, I hold that they are too heavy for the climate, for which a more frugal diet is alone suitable."[21] Another newspaper columnist advised newcomers to eat *more* fruit. The article also comments on the high cost of food.

> Strangers coming to British Honduras are cautioned in time that until they become somewhat acclimated it will be well for them to not undertake to eat all there is in the colony at one meal; they may suffer with indigestion if they do, besides having to contend against a collapse of their purses. Particularly they should decline meats and butter-cooked foods and all fats if they object to a bilious attack which means physic; and this may be a serious matter. It will be much better for the health to eat fruits and fishes and to be quite sparing of the latter …[22]

The foods cooked by poor and rural people were *anything* but light, and the colonial elite disparaged them. A settler in 1881 argued that Europeans could never thrive in the colony because they are "not used to eating plantains, salt-fish, or pork" adding that "a peasant in Europe lives better than the white planter here."[23] Archibald Gibbs distills the high colonial attitude toward local diet and culture:

> Their dwellings are little better than outhouses, even in the towns; their food coarse and ill-prepared, consisting for the most part of salt-fish, and plantains or yams, flour, pork, tropical fruits, vegetables and fresh fish, with rice or cornflour; clothing light and inexpensive as a rule, although they spend a good portion of their wages on cheap finery and dressy but not costly clothes. They raise poultry and pigs, but buy nearly every other article of food. Tea they use but little, but must have coffee and consume large quantities of sugar in one form or another.[24]

We can imagine what happened when women moved from their own kitchens to work in those of the elite and middle classes. The quotes above suggest that they resisted the orders they were given. We can also guess that they cooked the foods they liked for themselves and other servants, and probably fed some of that food to the employers' children. But we can also expect that as women learned to cook the kinds of things that Europeans liked and thought healthful, they would bring home leftovers, ingredients, ideas and recipes, which found their way into their own home cooking. As cooks broadened their range and repertoire of dishes, they could get better jobs in wealthier homes, hotels, restaurants and as caterers.

It is a mistake to think that only urban cooks moved between kitchens and cultures, finding ways to combine and mix styles and ingredients. Professional cooks, some of them male, worked for timber companies, sawmills, chicle camps and sugar mills to feed a multiethnic crew. These cooks, and others working across cultures and classes, creatively mixed and adapted recipes to changing ingredients and varied tastes. Rural Belize was not a settled place where isolated little groups clung to villages and local resources. People moved around to find work as coconut, coffee, cacao, sugar and banana plantations flourished and declined. Brief bursts of enterprise – the opening of a cohune nut oil factory, a banana railroad or a plan to export pigs to Jamaica – would draw hundreds of people, who would later disperse. As the mahogany business went into a long, slow decline, people had to move around and take whatever opportunities they could, including work on ships, on the Panama Canal and in other Caribbean ports, in a style Creoles now call "catch and kill." Young men and women might leave their family for ten or fifteen years working chicle, cutting wood or working in the city, before going home to a village to settle down and take up farming or stock raising. And all this movement constantly brought people of different class, origins and ethnic groups together, eating from the same kitchens.

All the ethnic groups in Belize had to broaden their palates, and their range of recipes, in mixed settings. And when workers went home they brought new tastes that led to a wider sharing of dishes and methods of preparation. To give one example, Creole workers from the mainland worked as police officers and business managers on coconut plantations on the offshore island of Ambergris Caye, where most of the population was Maya and Mestizo. Garinagu fishermen no doubt visited the island on occasion, and Maya from Ambergris visited the mainland and

stayed among Creoles. Through one or more of these routes, the Garinagu coconut, plantain and fish stew called *serre* became part of Ambergris cooking even in Mayan-speaking homes, to the point where it even ends up in a recent book on Mayan cooking![25]

The result of all this movement and exchange was not a homogenized national set of dishes. Instead, creolization led to a group of shared styles of preparation and cooking, combinations of ingredients and common ideas about the value and ranking of ingredients and dishes. But how, in everyday life, did this mixing take place?

Recipes for a New Cuisine

The idea that foods and diets will "just mix" when they come into contact is clearly a vast oversimplification, akin to the outmoded anthropological concept of *acculturation*. Mixing envisions cultures as streams of customs or beliefs that can flow together, as if the substance of culture were a thick liquid, a syrup or even blood. This clearly lies behind the common metaphor of cultural mixing as a "melting pot."[26] Another common idea was that a native culture could cloak itself with Western culture, keeping its integrity while giving the appearance of acculturation. An example is the idea that Mayan people adopted Christianity, but maintained a real Mayan spirituality underneath ("Idols behind Altars"). Culture again appears as a pliable substance.

Now we know that culture is more than a random assortment of ideas and customs. Instead there is a gestalt-like completeness that gives an underlying structure to the whole that is far greater than the sum of its parts. We also know that shaping culture is partially a political and public issue, and that people have unequal power to influence changes. When cultures meet or collide, the result is hardly predetermined or mechanistic. Power makes a difference, but not *all* the difference. The outcomes are tremendously variable; some cultures are "crushed" by others and disappear; other cultures swallow and absorb foreign influences and elements without overt effect.[27] Creolization is just one of many terms that social scientists use to try to understand the results of cultural contact.

Culture itself is a notoriously vague and contentious concept, so most discussions of culture contact or mixture tend to be highly general, unless they focus on a particular arena like language, music, religious practice or food. We find terms like "imposition," "blending," "overlay," "adoption" and "adaptation," but nothing that gives a more specific idea of how mixture is actually accomplished by human agency or action. Archeologists have to be more concrete, since they are usually limited to working with the material objects that result from cultural contact. But even archaeologists have a limited vocabulary for talking about the ways in which mixing or cultural influence is expressed and accomplished using material culture. They talk about

"borrowing," "imitation" and "adoption" of technologies and styles. But in practice, *how* do you actually put elements of different cultures together into new artifacts?

We need a larger and richer vocabulary for this task. The best way I have found to think of the different processes that go into cultural blending is to use the metaphor of *cooking*. You *assemble* ingredients, and then *combine* them in particular orders using techniques that *transform* them into something new. There are recognizable styles to cooking; dishes are related to each other by sharing ingredients, combinations or techniques, but styles are inherently flexible and adaptable. You can blend or mix styles of cooking by changing ingredients, their combinations and/or by using different techniques of transformation.[28] The industry that revolves around cuisine and cookery tends to put these various techniques for invention into the hands of professionals – cooks, chefs, food historians and writers of recipe books. Yet through history the actual forging of new foods from old, the creation of cooking, has been widely dispersed in the hands of everyone who gathers, produces, trades, selects and prepares food.

The blending or mixing process is not confined to the point where food is being physically prepared. It takes place at the level of the dish, the meal or even the sequence and ordering of meals in a regular diet.[29] For example, you could add Chinese five-spice powder or sesame oil to Texas chili to come up with a new dish. Or you could serve Japanese *edemame* soybeans alongside beef stew and bread, to arrive at a new meal. Finally, you can insert one dinner of supermarket take-out sushi into a weekly rotation of thoroughly American Midwestern meals. Each achieves blending through a different process.

Belizean cooks blended in a number of ways, which had unique historical context, and they used ingredients specific and unique to Belize. But the general processes of blending and creolization of foods are widespread and common to any number of global-local cuisines around the world. These general processes are the cutting edge of cultural and economic globalization, the way the constant innovation and market expansion driven by capitalism connects with local practices of cooking and eating. While the results of creolization and mixing are well known (and prominently featured in most popular cooking magazines), the processes that make new blends have not been described in a systematic way.

My next task, then, is to define the specific creolizing, synthetic and inventive cooking methods which Belizean cooks of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries used to make the blends we recognize today as Belizean food. But these are general categories that help understand how local things can become global, and global things local. In other words, this is how people produce both a sense of familiar locality, and exotic foreignness – often at the same time and in the same dish. While I apply this scheme to food and cooking, I suspect that they can also be used as analogies for similar processes of creolization in music, dance, dress and other aspects of material culture.[30]

Blending

The most obvious and best-documented form of creolization is physically mixing ingredients, methods, techniques and dishes in new combinations and orders. The simplest example I can think of is the Creole practice of mixing coconut milk in with the ingredients of a European recipe, as in the Creole bread in Chapter 2, which adds coconut milk to a simple wheat bread recipe in place of water.[31] Similarly Creole buns are a European sweet raisin bun made with coconut milk, and most Belizeans prefer their rice cooked with at least some coconut milk instead of water. In this kind of creolization you mix imported solids into local liquids, but you can also do the opposite. Many Belizean desserts involve blending some kind of local starch like cassava, sweet potato or shredded coconut with imported canned, sweetened condensed milk.

A favorite Creole dish called *boil up* is a variable mixture of different ground foods (root crops) that wonderfully blends locally grown and imported foods into something new. Some combination of locally produced cassava, plantain, green bananas, cocoyam and sweet potatoes is boiled in a single pot with imported white potatoes, carrots, cabbage, *boil cake* (rising flour dumplings) and salted pigtail (or other salt meat). There is usually fresh or salted fish as well, and many cooks add boiled eggs. The meal is served with a dish of sauce made from (usually imported) onions, some kind of tomato (usually canned paste or ketchup) and optional garlic, sweet peppers or other vegetables.

The pigtail in this dish really deserves a chapter of its own. When refrigeration became common in the early twentieth century, the global trade in salted meat in barrels declined quickly. Fresh and frozen had much higher status in the rich countries than cheap bulk salted meats. By the middle of the century salt pork and beef (now called corned beef) had become a luxury, ethnic or nostalgic food in Europe and North America. These same meats had become key ingredients in important dishes in poorer parts of the world, where they retained a high status because they were imported. No cook in the Caribbean would want to cook beans without a piece of salt pork or pigtail in the pot.

Canned meat, particularly beef and pork, took up some of the slack, but there was still demand for salted meats, which was met mostly by meat packers in the USA and Canada. Salted beef rib trimmings ("riblet"), and pigtails, ears and snouts packed in ubiquitous 5-gallon white plastic buckets became the cheapest salted meat available in the Americas (the containers are called *pigtail buckets* in Belize). Throughout the Caribbean salt cod and herring became expensive, but they had become essential ingredients in foods like Jamaica's "ackee and salt fish" that symbolized and unified new nations.[32]

Cooking techniques themselves are blended. Before cooking almost any kind of meat or fish in a European or American dish, or for any kind of recipe for that matter, a Belizean cook will "season" the meat in a style adopted from Yucatan,

using a marinating paste or rub that is itself a blend. The seasoning always includes lime juice or vinegar, *recardo* and seasoned salt. The *Kriol* word *recardo* comes from Spanish *recado*, a class of spice pastes common in Yucatan.[33] In Belize they use what Yucatecans call *recado rojo*; the main ingredients are mashed bright red *achiote* seeds and oregano. It is so widely used by all Belizean ethnic groups for marinating meat that it is locally manufactured, though the packaged blocks are also imported from Yucatan (now also found in Mexican markets in the USA). The seasoned salt in the marinade is usually "Season All," the only seasoned salt brand imported for many years. If there is a single characteristic flavor of Belizean food which cuts across most dishes, it is the taste imparted by this particular method of seasoning meat before cooking. Achiote is also a common flavoring in Kekchi and Mopan Maya cooking.

Submersion

This is a specialized kind of blending during food preparation, in which one ingredient is literally submerged and absorbed inside another, effectively disappearing. Blending can leave the individual elements separate, while submersion eliminates the identity of an element in the blend. The prolonged simmering of soup makes it an effective means of submersion. *Cowfoot soup* is a favorite food in modern Belize which probably has historical roots in slave cooking that used the cheapest cuts of meat (like chitterlings in the USA). As part of the ethnic revival of the 1990s, it became an emblematic form of *roots* food; local, working-class and down-to-earth. Several recipes I have collected include fragments of macaroni or spaghetti mixed into the peppery broth, dissolving as a thickening agent. Another favorite local soup, a kind of chowder called *conch soup*, often incorporates a can of Campbell's vegetable soup early in the cooking process; by the time the soup is served few traces are left.

Bouillon cubes are a very widespread example of creolization through submersion. Descended from the "portable soup" of the early British Navy, concentrated broth became a major industrial food product of the nineteenth century that traveled all over the world. Like many new foods, it was initially a health food, in the form of "Liebig's Extract of Beef." This was advertised heavily in Belize newspapers in the latter part of the nineteenth century, as it was elsewhere in the colonies as the vanguard of "scientific" health diets. The extract became "Oxo" in 1899, transformed into foil-wrapped dry cubes in 1910, which caught on in Britain where they were directly marketed door-to-door. With a simple and striking logo, Oxo launched one of the first global marketing campaigns, entered the trenches as rations in the First World War, and was globally the most widely known food brand in the 1920s.[34] All over the world, bouillon cubes entered local soups and sauces. I can imagine that in some places they "civilized" local foods and raised their rank

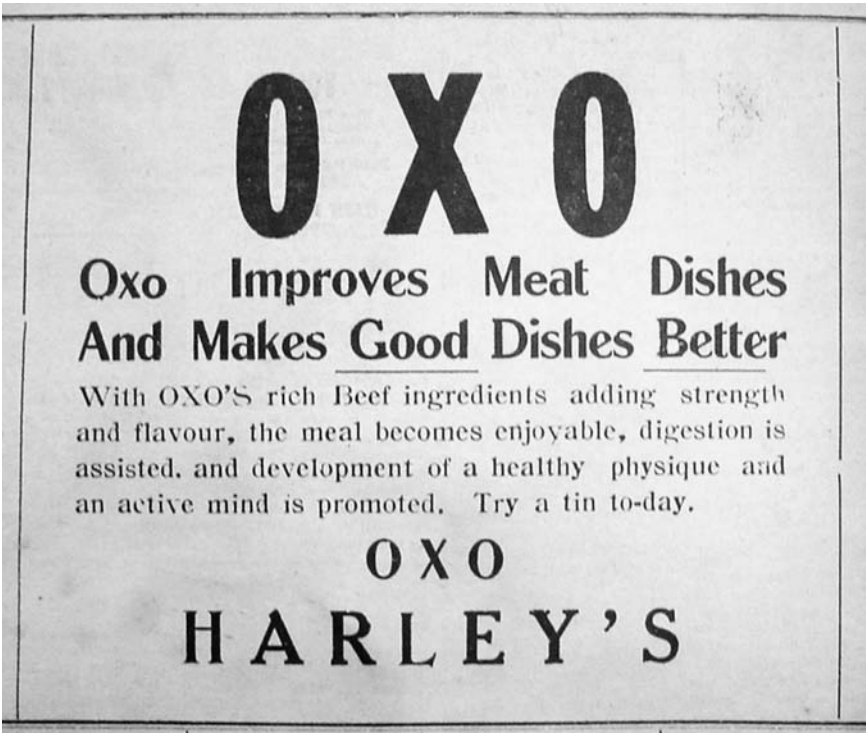

OXO
Oxo Improves Meat Dishes
And Makes Good Dishes Better
With OXO'S rich Beef ingredients adding strength and flavour, the meal becomes enjoyable, digestion is assisted, and development of a healthy physique and an active mind is promoted. Try a tin to-day.
OXO
HARLEY'S

Figure 6.1 Advertisement for OXO; like many European food products, it was marketed both for its taste and its supposed health-giving properties. Bouillon cubes quickly became part of cooking in many parts of the colonial world in the early twentieth century.
Source: *The Daily Clarion*, July 7, 1939.

and value, but in Belize they are completely inconspicuous and were simply absorbed into everyday local dishes as a seasoning.[35]

Substitution

A special form of mixing replaces one of the normal ingredients in a recipe with something new. Sometimes renaming the dish marks the substitution, but often the whole purpose of substitution is to simulate or deceive. One could call this "substituting up." Substitution is often associated with shortage or hardship, inability to afford or find the "correct" ingredients. During the Second World War the government told Belizeans to use banana flour instead of wheat flour to make bread because of shortages of shipping. (It was not a popular idea; clearly the male authorities had no experience of baking, or they would have known that banana flour has no gluten and makes very dense bread!)

An example of "substituting up" is *callaloo*. In colonial times this indigenous leafy green substituted for European spinach, and in a cream sauce it was called spinach (and still is in some households).[36] *Tacari* is more of a lateral substitution. In historical East Indian cooking tacari is a vegetable curry, richly flavored with many spices. As it was adapted by rural East Indians in Belize, and then borrowed by Creole cooks, it became a meat dish (usually chicken or fish) cooked with locally grown *yellow ginger* instead of much more complex (and expensive) curry powder.[37] Spices often substitute more freely than other ingredients.

Another example of ingredient substitution comes from northern Belize, where Maya-Mestizo people follow the very ancient practice of having hot, thick porridge-like drinks for breakfast. Called *atole* or *lab*, these drinks consisted of corn *masa* or finely ground cornmeal, with flavorings like cinnamon and sugar (Mexico now makes an instant *atole* in a pouch). In Belize it became common to substitute oatmeal for corn, and in that form it entered rural Creole breakfasts.[38] This is far different from "substituting up," since many people perceive oatmeal to be a better and more nutritious ingredient than the corn masa it replaces. Country people also make *lab* drinks from cassava and plantain, which suggests an interesting convergence of African and Mayan food traditions.

Dishes can substitute within meals or sets of meals too. Soft drinks and instant drink mixes, for example, have largely displaced lime juice or sorrel (made from hibiscus flowers) with most meals. A common substitution in all of Belize is white-flour tortillas instead of corn (maize) tortillas. Similarly, a plate of canned meat or fish can sometimes stand in for a dish made with fresh; here the status of the substitution is more ambiguous, since Belizeans differ widely in their ranking of canned vs fresh meat.

Wrapping and Stuffing

Sometimes creolization requires physically enclosing something new or foreign within a familiar wrapping, or vice versa. The effect can be either to raise or lower the status, or change the identity of either the stuffing or the wrapper. One of my first rural meals in Belize was fried Danish canned lunchmeat, wrapped in a homemade flour tortilla (itself originally a product of substitution), thus domesticating the foreign meat into something locally called a *gacho*. In Belize if you serve roast turkey at any dinner, public event or banquet, it is stuffed with completely conventional American or European bread stuffing, usually from a commercial mix. Roast turkey alone has no particular valence, ethnicity or meaning, while the stuffing transforms it into an item worthy of a public event.

Historically, slices of white bread and now hamburger buns have proven a powerful device for wrapping and enclosing all kinds of local and low-status ingredients, making them acceptable to middle-class and foreign tastes. Any kind of

sliced meat becomes a recognizable sandwich when it is enclosed with white bread. In the late twentieth century when hamburgers became a common food in Belize, their format was adapted to a wide range of fillings from stewed fish to fried gibnut.

Banana and *waha* leaves are an interesting example of wrapping, since they are used to cook and package food, and are discarded instead of eaten.[39] They usually wrap tamales of various kinds, a food tradition that is ancient among Mayan people, particularly in Yucatan where meat and fish are often cooked in leaves. While bread makes "local" contents "foreign," leaf wrapping makes foreign contents local. Store-bought American or Mexican cornmeal masa mix becomes indistinguishable from locally made corn masa inside the wrapper. While I have never been served canned meat in a tamale, I have eaten tamales that included canned tomato paste and Campbell's vegetable soup. Wrapped in a banana leaf, almost anything becomes localized – a fact that is recognized by foreign cooks who want to give a local flavor to the foods they cook for tourists.

In Mexico corn tortillas play the same role in wrapping all kinds of ingredients; the name of the dish and the mode of preparation as *tacos* or *enchiladas* or *gorditas* remains familiar, even if the stuffing is alien or strange. Professional chefs the world over have found stuffing and wrapping an easy way to introduce innovations and imports, in a format that reduces novelty and encourages new tastes. Wrapped dishes are ubiquitous in the world's street foods as well, in thousands of transformations of dumplings and rolls.[40] In this plebeian context wrappers are sometimes suspected of concealing suspicious or even dangerous ingredients.

Compression

Foodways often change when they move from place to place through simplification or compression. Cooking methods and foods are stripped down to their most common and emblematic elements, losing subtlety and variety along the way. Thus, a small selection of Ethiopian dishes becomes "African food," in America, or the pizza and pasta styles of southern Italy become "Italian food." This process is an essential part of creolization and mixture of different foodways, because it compresses a whole variety of dishes and modes of preparation into a single category lumped together, and a few emblematic dishes can be used to stand for the whole thing.[41]

In Belize two main forms of compression took place in the nineteenth century. First, elements of French, North American and English cookery were generalized into "European" food. While any traveler from the USA to the UK instantly recognizes two very different cuisines and traditions, from the distance of Belize it is easy to merge bits and pieces of both together. British and American expatriates living in Belize found the local blend a totally inadequate version of what they

were accustomed to. But given the small size of the local population of expatriates, the limited imported ingredients and uncooperative Creole cooks, they had to settle for a narrow and bland "international" fare of the kind served at the banquets discussed above. This is the same cooking familiar to today's international travelers; the lowest common denominator of airlines and international hotels that pleases few and offends nobody. Leas' count of the 1863 ethnic and national variety of Belize City (see table 5.1) gives some idea of the huge task of compression that faced contemporary cooks.

The second example of compression in Belize was the creation of "Spanish food." The complex and varied cooking of Honduras, Guatemala and Yucatan – each a distinct creole mixture of European and indigenous, added to the foods of diverse independent Maya farmers – became in Belize a stripped-down set of techniques, foods, dishes and meals called "Spanish." While the details of how this happened are almost completely lost to history, we can be sure that it did not take place simply as a syncretic effort within the immigrant Hispanic and Mayan communities. Instead, what is now Belizean "Spanish" food developed in a close relationship with Creoles, Europeans and other ethnic groups. There has been a substantial Hispanic presence in Belize City since emigration began: in the nineteenth century there were mixed Creole and Hispanic populations in all the northern and western towns.

While on the surface these remained distinct "ethnic" populations separated by language, the dividing line is very difficult to find in practice. Besides intermarriage and mating, most urban Hispanic people spoke Kriol in public, and despite prejudice and exclusion many were able to pass through the Catholic school system and enter professions, particularly medicine. The label "Spanish" encompasses a whole range of people from monolingual Honduran immigrants to monolingual Kriol-speakers who have Hispanic surnames and light complexions.[42] The compression of diverse cooking methods and foods into a much narrower "Spanish" or "Mestizo" cooking tradition was both an accomplishment of Spanish-speaking Belizeans who were adapting and fitting into Belizean society, and a product of Creoles who adopted a particular and narrow range of "Spanish" dishes.

We can only guess at the public and private contexts where Spanish food was compressed. Conch *ceviche* probably moved from the Yucatecan groups on the coast to other ethnic groups through bars and rum shops where it was often served as a snack to accompany drinks.[43] Factory made corn tortillas probably worked their way into Creole cooking as a convenience food, considerably cheaper than bread from a bakery, which remained something of a luxury in Belize well into the twentieth century. One likely explanation for the entry of compressed Spanish food into the repertoire of Creole cooks in the nineteenth century is that it solved a status problem. Middle-class urban Creoles, that thin stratum of underpaid

clerks, small shop owners and low-level government employees, were deeply concerned with respectability, which meant avoiding the "bushy" foods of the Creole working-class and rural population, the game foods and ground foods, salt fish and plantain. But they did not have the money to eat a varied diet of imported European foods every day. Many "Spanish" dishes were a safe option to get more affordable food variety while maintaining a distance from the urban poor.

Alternation and Promotion

One of the subtler means of creolization manipulates the timing, ordering and rhythm of cooking and eating. New or different foods are connected with particular events, days or periods, on one level keeping them separate, but on another level incorporating them into a regular consumption rhythm. A simple example is the way new foods are introduced as snacks, foods eaten outside an established rhythm of meals as social events. In Taiwan, for example, McDonald's began as a place for children to stop and get an afternoon snack on the way home from school. Wheat bread first entered the diet of Nigerians as a snack "treat" eaten in the market or while traveling.[44] In Belize many Mexican and Yucatec foods entered Creole homes as snack foods from street vendors. These included *garnachas*, *panades*, *salbutes* and *tamales*, all fast foods served from carts, buckets and baskets, in bars, markets, bus stations and small restaurants. Accepted as cheap interstitial food, eaten outside the context of family meals, their role could then expand as cooks learned to make them at home. Spanish foods first entered many Creole middle-class diets not as courses in the main noon meal, but as light dishes eaten as part of evening "tea."

Some dishes, particularly those linked to religious or civil festivities, never broaden their role or become daily foods. Black Christmas cake is a good example in Belize. Carefully assembled from expensive imported ingredients like dried fruits and nuts and then drenched in rum, it remains distinctly English in form, mostly unchanged from Victorian times.[45] While it is a cherished part of the yearly cycle of Belizean cooking and eating, it is still only a Christmas time treat. As we saw in Chapter 2, the more recent trend has been for Belizeans to import American holidays as whole packages of rituals and consumption. Birthday cakes and ice-cream celebrations became popular in the 1950s, Valentine's Day with cards and chocolates arrived in the 1970s and American-style Halloween with costumes and candy began in 1985.

Recently the place of Spanish snack foods in the Creole diet has expanded and they are now a common noontime meal, particularly for working people, single men and others who want something fast. This is part of a general broader change in the overall rhythm of Belizean life. The pattern of a large midday meal and a small one in the evening, as in many other countries, is reversing (see the example

of the Lambeys in Chapter 2). This is partially an adaptation to the life of dual-income urban couples, who cannot go home for a large meal, or have no time for it. But it is also a kind of promotion**,** when a meal or dish that has a "special" status, to mark a special event or celebration, becomes a more regular and a general part of the diet. While the food may lose some status as a result, I call it promotion because it also elevates the status of daily meals, as if every day were a holiday.

The most central example of promotion in Belize is *rice and beans* (usually served on a single plate with stewed chicken, potato salad and fried plantain), now the unquestioned national dish, eaten by all ethnic groups and classes at every occasion.[46] My older informants all told me, though, that when they were growing up in the early twentieth century, rice and beans was a rare special Sunday dish, because chicken was then expensive and hard to find, and the rice and beans were both imported.[47] Being able to eat rice and beans more often was a kind of luxury, and the dish retains this tinge of special status so it is still acceptable at wedding dinners, banquets, and public celebrations. From a minor and special role in the overall food system, rice-and-beans was promoted to the status of a staple; making it cheap became a fundamental national economic goal that has continued to shape agricultural policy to the present day (an issue that will come up again in the next chapter).

Class Boundaries and the Meaning of Food

The means of blending on this list are ways of taking things from different places and cultures and putting them together in new combinations. Many of the specific blends draw on the constant innovation of new industrially produced foods (and commercial recipes) that arrived as imports from Europe and the USA. Closer to home, Creole cooking has also drawn freely from other cultures that are part of the "national mix" of Belize. In both cases the orientation in time is clearly looking forward to the future, in the act of making something new.

This is only part of the way Belizean food has changed; another part of the process of creolization looks back toward the past and seeks to recover a sense of authenticity, locality and *roots*. This is not usually seen as creation, but as recovering continuity that is threatened by imports and influences from other cultures. It is therefore very easy to present this recovery as the *opposite* of the kinds of innovation, blending and creolization I have been discussing. People want to think of a food tradition as something that would continue, unchanging and timeless, unless some *outside force* knocked things askew.

Long ago, anthropologists and other social scientists also thought like this about cultures. Left to themselves cultures would be static and frozen, and instead of being active, questioning and curious, people called "traditional" or "primitive"

were portrayed as captives of their pasts, always living their lives according to a coded set of rules passed down unchanged between generations. In this view, *stasis* is the normal equilibrium of cultures, disturbed only by a change in the natural environment, like a long drought or a volcanic eruption or by contact with other cultures.

This set of assumptions about culture has fallen away and we have realized that culture is continually made and remade, so it is never static. People never completely agree on customs, and they have different interpretations of the past, in *every* culture.[48] There is no culture where everyone cooks in the same way; all cooks have their own particular ways of doing things learned from people who also had different ideas about tradition. This means that "tradition" is as much an active creation as any innovation or borrowing. Keeping things the same sometimes requires just as much effort and work as changing them.[49] It is too easy to ignore or take for granted the hard work that goes into teaching values and tastes to the next generation, passing along knowledge and keeping memories alive. Many Garifuna migrants to the United States worry about losing their culture, and return often to Belize to keep their traditions vital and growing.

People create connections with the past because the past has important meanings to them. But because Belizeans followed the clocks and calendars of colonial time that I outlined in Chapter 5, foreign things are part of the modern future, while anything specifically local comes from the past. In colonial time, city people are modern, and rural people are stuck in history. The upper classes who live in the city and consume imports are the most modern of all, while poor and working-class people are old-fashioned and conservative, just like rural folk. Following colonial time, why would people want to create or maintain any connection with the past at all?

There are good political and public reasons why people might want to forge a connection with rural, working-class or old-fashioned foods. In later chapters I will discuss the particular ways food was a part of twentieth-century Belizean nationalism, and in the ethnic revival movements of the recent past. But in colonial times, this was not really an option.

On a more basic level there is the physical embeddedness of taste and habit. We know that the basic physical sensations of taste that all humans have are very malleable: humans can learn to like the tastes of things as extreme as putrid meat and bitter quinine. But the tastes people learn in childhood are mentally and physiologically connected with important emotions and memories. Many Belizeans I have interviewed about their favorite foods have vividly recalled dishes they ate as a child on family holidays, gatherings and outings. Others mention the particular tastes of foods cooked over an old-fashioned fire hearth, like the taste of fresh johny-cakes baked over coals. Spanish-speaking Belizeans often have strong personal memories of the texture and taste of handmade corn tortillas fresh from the *comal*.

Class conflict and striving for wealth and position in colonial Belize led some people to seek to recover or create connections with rural, working-class, and local cooking. I have already mentioned the hyper-correct, very conservative consumption habits of the colonial middle class, clinging to their respectability.[50] Members of the richer elite of the colony did not have to worry so much about their respectable position, so they had more freedom to eat. One example, already mentioned, was wild game: expatriates happily killed hundreds of parrots in a day to make a parrot-tongue pie, or shot 140 "snipe" in an afternoon.[51]

There was also a "backdoor" channel providing rural foods to members of the Creole elite. Some families had relatives living in the country, and others had servants who came from the country or had relatives there. An elderly woman from one of the most prominent Creole families in Belize told me, in 1989, that when she was little many families got all kinds of things this way, including seasonal foods, game meat, fruits and other delicacies that were rarely in the market. She mentioned in particular *sweat rice* (rice picked early, parboiled, dried and threshed), freshwater turtles (hicatee and bocatora), freshwater fish and particular varieties of mango and other fruits.[52] Rich families also used this route to get turkeys at Christmas and fresh pork or beef. She spoke with a clear sense of both nostalgia and pride about those "country foods," which had been prepared by a servant and served on good china. The message sent by eating the food of poor rural people was clearly "though we are rich, we are still Creoles."

The small striving middle class was caught in the center of what I call a *style sandwich*. At the bottom were poor people eating "ground foods" and game by necessity, and on top you had rich people who could eat the same things out of nostalgia or for their exotic appeal. In the middle, poverty food was a constant reminder of how precarious class position could be, and how easy it would be to fall back into poverty. Some older middle-class Belizeans told me they had never eaten game meat, had never visited the country and refused to buy anything from vendors in public markets.

At one time lobster was a common and low-value food. An elderly man told me that when he was a boy buying fish in the market, the vendor would throw in a couple of lobsters for free. But when he got home his mother would not allow them in the house, since they were "trash fish." The rich could afford to buy imported canned lobster, and were in no danger from eating fresh local "ocean crayfish" as they were called, served cold with imported mayonnaise in a salad or smothered in a heavy sauce. Land crabs were likewise shunned by the middle class as common dirty scavengers, but eaten by rich and poor. Many fresh fruits followed the same pattern, explaining the demand for canned Hawaiian pineapple, which worked its way into middle-class Creole desserts in the early twentieth century.

The style sandwich tells us a great deal about the way ingredients, dishes, and preparations circulated in colonial society. As in many other cultures, things do

move downward through the classes, like the consumption of sugar in Europe tracked through time by Mintz.[53] Things start at the top and then "percolate" down as they become more common, less expensive and less exclusive.

We have fewer studies of foods that move upward in status, though there are examples in Europe and North America. Peasant breads, simple "rustic" dishes and the rare and wild foods gathered and cultivated by very poor people have been adopted (some would say co-opted) and elevated to the status of gourmet cuisine in the late twentieth century, and the same processes were no doubt taking place in the past.[54] The style sandwich suggests that they do not have to "percolate" upward, but can *jump* from the bottom to the top. It is easier to accomplish this at a distance, to elevate a food's status if the poor people you are copying are at a physical distance, or are safely in the past. Nostalgia, nationalism or ethnic revival can all be tools that cause the jump from one class to another. In Chapter 8 I will show how ethnic pride, nationalism, tourism and migration have provided the impetus for many Belizean foods to jump up in status.

Another way to help things jump is through a kind of patronage that often appears as condescension, fantasy or parody. Marie Antoinette enjoying her play farm at Versailles, or antebellum plantation owners watching black-faced minstrels perform both show how it is possible for the elite to keep the poor at a distance, while still consuming particular (and often wildly inaccurate) elements of their culture. Besides the tea socials, balls and cake walks, "creole speeches" and minstrel shows were very popular in nineteenth-century Belize. A case of parodic consumption was recorded in *The Clarion* in 1906, and is worth recounting at some length for what it tells us about class in Belize in the high colonial period (at a time of general economic depression and widespread unemployment).

> 'A Poverty Social'
>
> A rather unique party – for Belize – was given by Mr. and Mrs. Hopkins, at their residence in Regent St., in honor of a young bridal couple, Mr. and Mrs. McGonigal of Mobile, who have been spending their honeymoon in Belize.
>
> The invitations for the function were written in chalk on wrapping paper and asked each guest to bring a tin cup. The guests, catching on, wrote their acceptances on any old scrap of paper, some even on discarded and ancient linen: one gentleman using a much frayed cuff.
>
> The refreshments were also unique for a wedding supper and consisted of lemonade, and ginger snaps. The liquid refreshment was served in a new galvanized bucket of substantial proportions from which each guest was expected to take a dip and cakes were supplied in a large meat dish and everyone helped themselves on the cut and come principle.
>
> The principle [sic] feature of the event was the curious and motley costumes worn by the guests. Where the ingenuity of the guests, in presenting as poverty-stricken an appearance as possible, was so strikingly brought out, it is almost invidious to mention

anyone, but the creations of Messrs C. O. Taylor and R. L. Henstis were so beyond the common that despite my fear of offending others I must say a word or two. Mr. Taylor was arrayed in an old pair, of what had once been (some years ago), a pair of elegant light pants, but from long use bore a dingy and shopworn appearance. The bottoms were thrust into the tops of a pair of heavy boots. His upper person was arrayed in a holely whiteseater, much the worse for hard wear and round his waist, by way of braces, a shawl of gorgeous pattern was tied … His tin cup, in true hobo style, was attached to a piece of string and dangled at his side.

Mr. Henstis presented the appearance of a real live Dago Anarchist, dressed in a pair of old striped trousers, a blackseater, a long morning coat (hoary and green with age) topped off by an ancient beaver hat, which might have been done in the XVIIth Century.

The whole gathering presented the appearance of a much out-at-the-elbow circus, but in fulfillment of the old saw 'Appearances are deceptive' the old rags covered some of the most popular of the Belize 400. The party was a huge success and much enjoyed by all who attended it.[55]

Ethnicity and Creolization

The hectic mixing and blending of cooking in colonial Belize was not just a big stew pot, which reduced everything to a single style. Each ethnic group and class continued to cook and eat in distinct ways, especially in rural areas which produced a lot of their own food. If we use the term Creole narrowly to mean only those people descended from Africans and Europeans who spoke Kriol as their first language, we could say that only Creole cooking was really synthetic and polyglot, absorbing foods, ingredients and techniques from all the other cultures in the country, as well as from foreigners and the global marketplace. This Creole cooking with its European and African roots became a kind of "lingua franca," a set of dishes that everyone in the colony understood and ate, some more often than others.

But appearances in this case are very deceptive. Each ethnic group was also absorbing, selecting, changing and adapting their ways of eating, fitting in to Belize, using the ingredients available in shops and markets, meeting others in the workplace and marketplace and kitchen. While colonial policy worked to keep each ethnic group separate and distinct, it could not suppress the mixing that was taking place beneath the surface. To use *creole* in a broader sense, we can see how each ethnic, class and rural/urban difference was constantly crossed and softened by a lot of common cooking and eating that made them all creolized.[56]

This broader form of creolization did not appear at the level of dishes or meals. Boil up was still recognizably Creole, *darasa* was Garifuna, tacari East Indian and relleno negro Hispanic.[57] Instead creolization operated to build a common lexicon, sets of ingredients, ways of putting them together and common values. The shared

use of *recado* and lime to season meat is just one example. Fish are cleaned and prepared for the pan the same way all over Belize. Coconut milk and oil are used everywhere for flavoring dishes. Chickens are cut up the same way, meats are always fried brown before stewing, ripe plantains are everywhere sliced lengthwise and fried soft, allspice seeds are used to season soups by all and a flour roux is always the base for stew. This list could go on and on; without knowing it, Belizean cooks from all ethnic groups do many things in exactly the same, taken-for-granted ways.[58]

Some of the elements of this common lexicon include the valuation of different ingredients. Throughout all Belizean cooking, the highly valued items were packaged, preserved, branded imports, and particular wild game.[59] Local meats, fruits and vegetables always ranked lower. This is especially clear at holidays and festivities, where imports or local game were required elements of the meal. Even in everyday meals, canned or preserved meat or fish was widely preferred to the local product. Imported white flour was better than local corn meal, and Irish potatoes outranked cassava or yams. Commercial bread from a bakery (imported right up to the 1960s) was always a treat.

Another common value that emerged from colonial creolization was a strong preference for highly processed ingredients, and an equation of whiteness with purity. "Creole" was the marked category, so imported wheat bread was simply "bread," while the local product was "Creole bread." Limes are large and sweet, but "Creole limes" are smaller, less green, and sour. Cooks I worked with used words like *clear*, *bright* and *light* for imported cooking oil, corn syrup, salt and other products, in contrast to local or Mexican products. Even stale imported spices like oregano were thought better than fresh local spices, disparaged as *bush herbs*. Wheat-flour dumplings were preferable to mashed plantain matilda foot, and canned condensed milk to the local fresh product.

This convergence was not necessarily voluntary. All the class and ethnic communities of colonial Belize worked within a common set of constraints on the variety of ingredients they had to work with. Market channels were firmly controlled by a small number of Belize City merchant houses which all imported the same limited ingredients and were slow to innovate. They simply did not sell the ingredients that Chinese, East Indian or Hispanic cooks needed to maintain their cuisines. For reasons discussed in the next chapter, the local market rarely offered much variety either. Cooks *had to* simplify and substitute.

The hard physical and cultural work of creolization and resistance created a uniquely Belizean creole (in the broad sense) cooking, which was not yet recognized in any way as a cuisine. Why not? Why did most of the twentieth century go by without any public recognition that Belize had its own cuisine? And why is Belizean cuisine *still* a contentious and disputed issue after more than twenty years of independence? To find answers for these questions we will have to delve into both the local and global politics of food during the last century.

Recipe: Tacari (Yellow Ginger Chicken)[60]

2 lbs (900 g) chicken (or one small chicken)
2 onions, chopped
⅓ cup (80 ml) coconut oil
2 teaspoons (10 g) yellow ginger powder (turmeric)
2½ cups (495 ml) boiling water
3 tablespoons (45 ml) flour
⅓ cup (80 ml) cold water
2–3 teaspoons (10–15 ml) fresh lime juice

Cut chicken into small pieces.

Fry onion in coconut oil on high heat until just brown.

Add chicken and yellow ginger.

Cook over high heat for about 10–15 minutes as chicken gets brown. Don't worry if some of the mix sticks to the pot.

Add boiling water, cover and cook gently over low heat for 30–45 minutes until chicken is soft. Add extra water if it gets too dry and starts to stick. You can use some coconut milk instead of water if you like.

Mix flour and cold water until smooth. Add to chicken and stir in lime juice.

Cook on very low heat for another 20–30 minutes. You can add some chopped fresh cilantro at the last minute as a garnish.

Serve with white rice (best with coconut rice – substitute coconut milk for water).

–7–

Food Politics and the Making of a Nation

> Have you ever been to Belize? If you haven't, don't go, unless you have a stomach of cast iron and no sense of smell … Once in Belize, there is no escape until a boat arrives … It is historical that Belize was built on a swamp filled in with mahogany chips and empty gin bottles. I often wonder why it was built at all. Go where you will, you will find no capital like it. Belize is a disgrace to the British Empire – a monumental blemish – the worst possible advertisement for British administration.
>
> "Explorer" Frederick Albert Mitchell-Hedges, 1931.

Should you be able to sue Burger King for selling you food that made you fat? Is it more important to have cheap pork from huge corporate hog factories, or more expensive pork from small family farmers? Why do the US government and the European Union pay farmers not to farm? Why does the WTO force free trade on the rest of the world, while allowing the US and EU to subsidize their own agri-businesses?

These questions all cross the line from matters of taste to issues of public health, legal responsibility, employment and global trade. The choices people make in dining have deep economic and political ramifications, and political decisions have a lot to do with the price and quality of the food that ends up on your table. Politics and food are deeply intertwined. Governments have always used food policy to starve and manipulate internal and external enemies, but they are also overthrown by hungry mobs and discredited by their failure to provide abundance. Since the time of the Romans, empires have organized vast flows of food, draining some areas and feeding others. The British Empire was no different. As Davis shows in *Late Victorian Holocausts,* it manipulated trade, duties, tariffs and markets to maintain the flow of cheap grain to England, even if it meant starving millions of colonial subjects.

Davis singles out some truly malign and criminally indifferent politicians and administrators who enforced trade policies that they knew were deadly. But we should be careful about giving too much credit to bureaucracies and politicians for their abilities to plan and carry out policies that actually achieved their goals. There was ample scope for misguided and uninformed regulations, incompetent and badly trained administration, corruption and just plain stupidity within the British Empire (and other European colonial systems were equally bad or worse).

Well-intentioned policies often backfired and caused irreversible harm. Unforeseen details or unaccounted costs could derail even enlightened programs. Mistakes were amplified by colonial administrators' pigheaded ethnocentrism and their absolute conviction that British ways were superior. If policies were failing, it was because the "natives" were not doing things properly, because they were ignorant or stuck in superstitious customs.

The records of colonial administration in Belize hardly support an image of powerful and decisive colonial administrators imposing their will on exploited and powerless local folk. Belize had its share of superintendents, governors and district officers who were callous, inflexible and arrogant. Since it was such a poor backwater of the empire, it was more of a dumping ground or a penalty posting than a stepping-stone in a brilliant career.[1] Governors had to cope with entrenched local interests and politics which embroiled them in endless complaints and counter-complaints back to the Colonial Office, which rarely provided clear decisions or guidance. Reforming the colonial system was a slow and often futile task.

Food policy is one of the best illustrations of the sustained failure of colonial government in Belize, and the way generations of administrators simply did not understand the local economy or culture. It is hard to avoid using the word "stupidity" for food policy in Belize. To be kinder, a major part of the problem was simply a lack of continuity in leadership and a total inability to learn anything from history. Taken as individual acts, the choices, policies, ideas and decisions of colonial officers often make sense, but in the context of a long history of similar ideas, all of which failed, those same acts appear ponderously stupid.

This chapter deals with the late colonial period of the twentieth century up to Independence in 1981, a period when British Honduras became the sluggish backwater of the empire which Mitchell-Hedges so despised. I want to show how the food economy of the colony *became* backward and primitive. But this underdevelopment was not the result of neglect or isolation; it came about through participation in global markets, and constant efforts to modernize and promote agriculture. Like patent medicine, the thing that was supposed to heal the patient was addictive and dangerous, and caused more problems than it cured.

Problems That Will Not Go Away

I had personal experience with shortsighted and ineffective development projects when I was a consultant on agriculture in Belize for the US Agency for International Development in the 1980s. The Belize government and USAID agreed that locally produced fresh beef and pork were too expensive, and decided that the best way to lower the prices would be to help farmers raise pigs and cattle more cheaply. This would raise the income of Belizean farmers and cut down on the huge amount of meat that was imported each year. Technical experts were imported

from American universities at great expense. Taking a look at "rudimentary" local stockraising, they recommended a large project to get farmers to plant "improved" pastures with foreign grasses, to import better breeds of cows and pigs and teach farmers to raise them more scientifically, and then build a modern slaughterhouse. The project cost about US$5 million from US taxpayers, and required an enormous amount of time and effort from the Belize Ministry of Agriculture and extension officers and farmers, who were already overburdened with work.

One day, while the project was just getting started, I sat with a group of consultants in the Ministry of Agriculture, while the permanent secretary kept us waiting for two hours. Sitting in the corridor sweating and bored, I noticed a whole wall of books and reports, and idly started to look through the titles. To my amazement, I found a whole series of livestock project proposals and reports, stretching back to the 1930s. Leafing through them, I was amazed to find that each one had made the same recommendations as our project – import better stock, plant pasture grasses and improve marketing!

Each project seemed to start from scratch, without paying any attention to previous projects that failed, and most project teams did not know that what they were proposing had been tried before. Not a single one of those projects had made any real long-term change. The reasons had nothing to do with a lack of intelligence or diligence on the part of Belizeans. In each project, farmers welcomed the assistance, and were eager to produce and sell more animals for the local market. This made me think that the problems were structural and political, and had nothing to do with the farmers, the climate, Belizean pasture grasses, screworms or vampire bats – all of which had been blamed at one time or another.[2]

After the livestock project, I worked for USAID evaluating a rice project. Again the idea was to make Belize self-sufficient in rice by introducing better technology and improved seeds. Fortunately, I was able to derail this one, since I could draw on personal memory and experience with a British-funded project that had tried exactly the same thing between 1979 and 1984, wasting about US$7 million before finally admitting defeat. Later I found records of another identical rice project in the 1950s, and earlier ones in the 1930s.[3]

Understandably, my enthusiasm for agricultural projects steadily declined. I was reprimanded by USAID when I argued against a project that was supposed to get Belizean farmers to grow tomatoes and melons for winter markets in Texas and Florida. This turned out to be an expensive failure that left many farmers bankrupt and landless. Finally I quit my fledgling career as a development bureaucrat when faced with a project to break up the Indian reservations in southern Belize, to make the Kekchi and Mopan Indians into cocoa farmers – for a world market that was already flooded with cocoa beans.[4]

I have never believed that all these expensive failures are part of a vast conspiracy to crush small countries and make them dependent on the USA. Most of

the people I worked with in USAID and CARE, and a host of other acronymed organizations were well intentioned, sincere, and even idealistic. They genuinely wanted to help, and they usually fought with the inflexible Washington bureaucracy on behalf of Belize, instead of simply following orders. The problems that frustrated their efforts were simply *not under their control*. They cannot be solved in Belize because they are part of *global politics*. No amount of "TA" (technical assistance) for farmers in Belize will change that.

Why Belize Cannot Feed Itself

British colonial officers and administrators of earlier times faced exactly the same long sequence of exasperating failures in getting Belize to feed itself, and export something besides mahogany and logwood. Throughout the late nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries they hosted visiting commissions and specialists who published endless reports on the agricultural potential of the country. These culminated in the early 1950s when, following a series of pointed questions about the neglect of British Honduras in the British Parliament, a study team produced *Land in British Honduras*, still the most thorough study of rural Belize.[5] Each study begins with similar statements about Belize's paradoxical dependence on imported food. As a guide to Central America said in 1923, "British Honduras can grow almost anything needed for local consumption, but, nevertheless, imports the greater portion of its food supplies, including such articles as rice, corn, and vegetables. Even sugar, coffee, and leaf tobacco are imported."[6] Forty years earlier a local newspaper stated the same thing.

> In a country whose waters are teeming with edible fish of the first quality and flavour, whose lands produce with easy and simple cultivation a profusion of "bread kinds" and delicious fruits – and which has the Markets of New Orleans and New York within four to eight days by steam, it is ridiculous to talk of our being dependent on salt provisions.[7]

Consumers and shoppers felt the same way.

> There is no reason why we should have to depend for our subsistence almost entirely on tinned meats, tinned fruits, tinned biscuits, tinned milk, tinned butter and tinned everything eatable and drinkable in a country where nature is more than bounteous [*sic*], where a virgin soil yields a thousandfold to the slightest exertion on the part of the agriculturist, and where the products of tropical and temperate regions can be made to grow in luxuriance and with little care bestowed on their cultivation.[8]

Part of the problem here is simply the old issue that Europeans and white colonials did not want to eat the plantains, roots, fruits and other foods grown and eaten

by rural people. They did not even recognize local root and vegetable gardens as farms, which in their minds raised European crops in neat rows on squared plots. This is why it was possible for Captain Henderson, in the same book, to complain about the total lack of agriculture in the settlement, and then to note that he passed through miles of plantain groves around each town.[9]

By the end of the nineteenth century, the lack of local food production had gone from an inconvenience to a serious economic problem. After a drastic currency devaluation in 1893, the price of food doubled while wages stayed the same or even declined.[10] This caused tremendous hardship even for those who had regular jobs. Logging companies began to use tractors and other mechanical equipment to move and load mahogany, and they needed fewer workers. They stopped providing rations to the few workers they kept, and they only hired men for six months of the year. In 1895 there were riots in Belize City and the shops selling imported goods were targeted by looters.[11]

Just four years later, in April of 1899, a delegation of "mechanics" (cobblers, tailors, smiths, carpenters and other craftsmen) complained to the Governor that while the food they had to buy had a heavy import duty, and was getting more and more expensive, there was little or no import duty on shoes, clothes, furniture and other items they made. Cheap imported goods were putting them out of business. They asked him to either lower the duty on food, or raise it on manufactured goods, so they could continue to survive. The governor dismissed their case and told them to "go and dig sand" (the most arduous and lowest paid job in Belize City). Or, he suggested, the men should "grow their own food," or "plant cocoa and coffee," though he did not suggest where to find some farmland.[12]

During more than two centuries of frustration, there were many explanations for Belize's failure to feed itself. One of the first was in the 1829 Honduras Almanac:

> The soil is naturally sterile … All the esculent vegetables used at the table may be raised in considerable plenty, but they are comparatively tasteless and consequently deficient in their nutritious powers. To this cause may be attributed the leanness of the cattle …[13]

Right up through the twentieth century, a favorite explanation for the lack of commercial agriculture in Belize was what one governor politely called the "disinclination of the coloured people for agricultural labour."[14] The story, told over and over again in popular and government documents, is that "our people are a wood-cutting class, that they have been wedded to that pursuit for generations back and that you will never get them to take up anything else …" Others blamed the heritage of slavery for creating a "lazy" population.[15]

A more generous approach dropped the racial connection, blaming instead a general lack of enterprise, education, or low wages. An American expert in 1923 says "native labor has been trained to forest pursuits and not agricultural

industry."[16] An angry newspaper editorial from 1912 blames urban attitudes and class ambitions, instilled by an educational system that trained people for the office instead of the farm.[17] Another columnist complained:

> Our boys should get right into farming … But instead they prefer to remain in town "wearing out life in shapeless idleness" doing an odd job when they feel like it … Meanwhile, their highest ambition is to get into the government service, or a shop or store, play cricket, wear the finest clothes their little money can buy, play some musical instrument, go to dances, swear, and smoke a cigar or cigarette.[18]

These complaints are grounded in the problem of living standards outlined in Chapter 4. People accustomed to a particular standard of living do not easily or happily give it up for what they see as a life of hard work and miserable poverty. Farm work pays less than logging or other jobs in Belize, living expenses are high and, like people in most parts of the world, given a chance people would rather get their children educated for another kind of work. This is why most farm workers in Belize today are Latin immigrants from low-waged places like Mexico and Honduras. But this hardly makes Belize a unique place, so it cannot explain the persistent failure of farming to feed Belize. Any ethnic explanation like "Creoles don't like to farm" has to face the fact that the countryside is full of frustrated Creole (and Mestizo) farmers who would be happy to grow *anything* if they could find somewhere to sell it at a profit.[19]

Lack of access to land has also been blamed for Belize's agricultural problems. By 1750 the larger merchants and loggers had claimed most of the fertile land in the country. What they didn't want – mostly the mountains, swamps and pine savannahs – was left to the government as "Crown" land. The whole tax system in the colony was set up for the convenience of large absentee landlords, who paid no land tax at all until 1871, and only a tiny one until 1967.[20] This is why the government had to depend so heavily on import duties for finance, and why there was never any money for roads, hospitals or other basic services.

The large "forestocracy" landholders had little interest in farming. They would sell large blocks of land to the richer sort of immigrant who wanted to start a commercial plantation and sometimes rent property to small farmers. But it was expensive and difficult, right up to the 1970s, for a Belizean who wanted to farm to just go out and buy five acres; so it was easy to blame the high price of land, its monopoly or high rents for a lack of farming.[21]

But the colonial government did make land available to farmers in various ways. In 1868 land was first set aside for Garinagu and Maya villages, and the government began to auction small parcels of Crown land in surveyed areas.[22] Late nineteenth-century newspaper advertisements show that small plots of farmland were often for sale, usually including livestock, mature fruit trees and food crops in the ground. More to the point, in a large country with few roads and a lot of remote

areas, Belizean farmers have always had a very pragmatic approach to using land.[23] If there is nobody around to enforce their ownership, squatters move in and farm. So the lack of land cannot alone be blamed for stopping food production.

If land was not such a crippling problem, there were plenty of other things to blame. The poor transportation system depended on small riverboats into the twentieth century, when the government finally built some roads. Labor and imported tools, seeds and fertilizers were all expensive.[24] Belizean farmers were accused of lacking scientific knowledge, so the nineteenth-century colonial government established a botanic station and an agricultural school, held agricultural expositions and sent local products to international agricultural and trade shows.[25] Apparently these had little effect, since 100 years later the experts *still* accused farmers of lacking education and scientific training.[26] After all these years of failure, it is no wonder that some began to think the entire society was to blame, that Belize had developed a "culture of dependence" that killed any enterprise:

> In government, an irksome form of crown colony administration exists. In culture, a morbid fear of financial failure and a continued shying away from the grind of following methods suitable for B.H … In business, far too few firms have decided to export B.H. farm and forest products. Consequently, B.H. farmers have little financial incentive. In farming, lack of sufficient technical skill and appreciable financial security have resulted in disgustingly low yields and crippling high prices and the corresponding result that every farm product that could be produced in B.H. is imported in huge stockpiles. B.H. is a veritable foreign exporter's paradise. The wonder is that we find the money to buy all the things we need.[27]

The Real Problem is Global, not Local

All these explanations can be reversed, so we could say that *if* there were a market for local food and many prospering farms, people would have *demanded* better access to land, road construction and fairer tax laws. If you could make a decent living as a farmer, more people would be farming. And the overall "lack of enterprise" or interest in farming is a realistic response to a lack of possibilities. When there was a profitable market, Belize farmers responded quickly and enthusiastically – when fruit-company steamers started coming to southern Belize in the 1880s, Creole, Maya and Garifuna farmers quickly planted thousands of acres of bananas.[28]

I have mentioned several ways local and colonial culture interacted to retard local food production. To summarize:

- European preconceptions about what farms should look like made existing farming virtually invisible. Experts wanted to see men growing export crops in

neat rows, not mixed groups of men and women tending little plots of cassava and yams in the shade of plantains along the riverbanks. *These* people never got help from the government.[29]

- Belize City merchants were politically and economically powerful. They made money so easily from importing food that they had no incentive to buy in the local market. They did their best to manipulate exchange rates and duties to keep imports cheap.
- Import duties on food were generally low, while higher duties kept seeds, fertilizer and farm equipment expensive.
- The market system was entirely oriented to Belize City. Farmers had few places to sell their crops, and little information on prices or demand.[30]
- Imported food was attractively packaged, heavily advertised and in most forms kept well without refrigeration, which was scarce and expensive.
- In the colonial value system imports were a mark of status and prestige.

Beneath all the educated studies and impassioned letters about the "problems of agriculture," now and then the voice of a small farmer piped up with some common sense. From the point of view of rural farmers, most of these abstractions were invisible. What they could see was that compared to their costs of production, prices were so low that there was a lot of risk for little profit.[31] More important, the population of the country was *small*. Even in the largest city, the market for any kind of fresh food is easily flooded. With only a short dry season for planting, most fruits and vegetables are abundant for very short seasons. In March you are lucky to find a mango anywhere in the country at any price; in May every mango tree is dropping fruit and they are so cheap that it hardly pays to carry them to market.[32] Farmers have to compete with each other for a place in the market, which means that the person willing to accept the lowest wages or profit always wins. This is hardly a recipe for prosperity.

National Thinking in a Global World

All this finger pointing by distracted farmers, agricultural experts, and government officials and newspaper writers seeks something or someone to blame *in Belize*. They are acting as if Belize really has a *national* economy, like the USA or Germany, so development is a matter of government making the right local decisions. They treat Belize as if it were a country, a continent, a place with its own economy. But Belize has always had an *international* economy, its borders open to movements of people and capital. Local events are ultimately caused by faraway European wars and politics, trade systems and even fashion trends. All the important decisions about Belize's position in the global economy – even today – are made *outside* the country.

No amount of land reform, agricultural science or entrepreneurial culture can do anything to change Belize's fundamental position in the world economy. The basic problems of local agriculture are not *local* at all. Instead, from its very beginnings Belize was just a place where you could cut wood. As a part of the British Empire, Belize's trade and development were indirectly run from abroad, and the goal was to keep up the flow of mahogany at the least expense. There was no plan to make it a self-sufficient little nation that could trade on equal terms with others.

Given the structure of the world economy there was simply *no way* Belize could develop a national economy. Why? The reasons are complex, and they changed over the centuries. But one thing did not change: the strong commitment of the rich countries of North America and Europe to develop their own agriculture and national food security.[33] Their governments supported farmers with many kinds of visible and invisible subsidies. They built or financed roads, railroads, canals, agricultural colleges and gave patent protection to new farming technologies. They created national banks to give credit to farmers. In the USA and Canada fertile land taken from indigenous people was given to farmers, a massive subsidy that allowed American and Canadian farmers to produce the cheapest grains, pork and beef in the world.[34] To nurture farming, these countries put high tariffs on imported food, protecting farmers from competition. When overproduction threatened to lower prices, governments bought huge amounts of food or set up systems of "price support." As if this were not enough, in the later twentieth century most of the richer countries gave direct cash subsidies to farmers, as well as cheap fuel, subsidized electricity, cheap irrigation water from publicly funded dams and artificially low rents on public land.

Colonial governments did nothing like this for farmers. Instead, they had to face stiff competition from imported food from rich countries. How could a Belizean farmer ever hope to produce cheese, butter or pork cheaper than the attractively packaged preserved or canned imports readily available in every shop, made by Dutch and Danish farmers with huge subsidies? And when the rich countries found themselves sitting on massive piles of surplus food, like the "butter mountain" in northern Europe in the 1980s, they often "dumped" it below cost on the world market. Worse, many sent surplus food as free "food aid" to poor countries, where it often put local farmers out of business.[35] In the name of "free trade" and "structural adjustment" the US and EU governments have ruthlessly forced countries throughout the world to eliminate subsidies to their own farmers and open their markets to cheap American food exports, food that is only cheap because farmers in the US receive billions of dollars of subsidies.[36]

At every turn, a farmer in Belize faces obstacles. Tractors and other equipment, along with seeds, fertilizer, pesticides and even things as basic as buckets and shovels have to be imported. Just moving crops over bad roads and flooded bridges can be held up for months over something so small as a spring that has to come

from Japan. Fuel today costs a Belizean farmer more than three times what a farmer in the USA pays. This is why imported American white potatoes are cheaper and more reliably available than local cassava or sweet potatoes. It really was cheaper for the nineteenth-century slave owner to import salt pork from Ohio than to use slaves' work time to raise hogs.

It is much easier to think of food production as a *technical* problem that can be solved with scientific techniques like GMOs and irrigation. Food security is then a technical problem for experts instead of a political issue of global inequality. Every new technology for producing more food – whatever the risk – is sold to us as a way to increase food production and help feed the starving billions.[37] On the contrary, economic history tells us that hunger and famine are less a product of food shortage than of poor food *distribution*. The people who need food the most don't have the money to buy it, and those with the money can buy as much as they want.[38]

The moral and political dimensions of food are flattened out so they look like a problem that can be solved with some new technology, or better advice from a foreign expert or better economic policy. The finger points away from the unfair global food system. And nobody sees the deep and tragic irony of the endless parade of agricultural experts from England and the USA, who come to Belize to show farmers how to produce more "efficiently."[39]

What is a Poor Country to do?

Since farmers in rich northern countries had such a huge advantage in producing grains and meat, the poor countries concentrated on export crops like cocoa, tropical fruits, spices, coffee and sugar which could not be grown in temperate zones (at least until the advent of sugar beets). At various times Belize has exported coconuts, citrus fruit, bananas and sugar, and today there is also some trade in papayas, mangos, and other fruits.[40] According to the dogma of free trade, these are the crops where poor countries like Belize have a "comparative advantage," so it makes economic sense for them to import cheap food and export orange juice concentrate. They should not worry about food security, and should instead trust the global system of trade.

Unfortunately Belize is competing with every other poor tropical country in the world to sell coconuts, oranges and bananas. With its relatively high wages and high standard of living, Belize cannot produce tropical crops as cheaply as places like Honduras, where workers get a third of Belizean wages. Belize is also a tiny player in export markets. As the biggest producer of orange juice concentrate in the world, Brazil has some power to affect world markets. Compared to Brazil, Belize's production is just a drop in an ocean.

Size presents other problems. In the 1980s the government convinced some farmers to grow soybeans, and then started looking for something to do with the

soybeans, since Belizeans do not eat them. My colleagues at USAID and I went off looking for equipment to set up a small pressing plant to make soybean oil, which makes sense for a country that imports huge amounts of cooking oil. But the smallest plant we could find had a capacity to crush 10,000 *tons* of soybeans a year, making more than twenty times the oil Belizeans could buy. If the oil could be produced cheaply (which was doubtful), the rest of the oil could be sold abroad. But there was no way to make the jump from 5 tons of soybeans a year to the thousands needed to run the pressing plant. What would you do with all the soybeans in the meantime? In two years I saw the same scale problem ruin plans to export peanuts, mangos, winter vegetables, melons and cut flowers.[41] Belize just cannot produce enough to get a foot in the door of North American and European markets.[42]

The only thing that keeps Belizean export agriculture afloat is the labor of Hondurans, Guatemalans and Salvadorans who are willing to work for lower wages than Belizeans (the same thing has happened on farms in the USA and EC). Belize also had "sugar quotas" from the British and US governments allowing them to sell thousands of tons well above the open-market price. Europe buys Belizean bananas and citrus products at a supported subsidized price. But these limited international subsidies are subject to all kinds of political pressures, and are being phased out.[43] The 2003 meeting of the World Trade Organization fell apart over just this issue: the unfair competition of subsidized agriculture in the rich countries. Under this regime we will see a "race to the bottom" as coffee and cocoa farmers around the world compete for an oversupplied world market where prices are declining (though costs to consumer continue to rise).

There is simply no way to "export your way out" of these problems, despite the cheerful advice of economists and agronomists who tell countries like Belize that if they could be more *efficient* and *modern*, if they would just develop their own free markets, farming would take off. For more than a century most of the countries of the Americas have followed this advice and have tried to nurture and modernize agriculture. One of the most popular ideas was called "import substitution." The idea was to temporarily protect local farmers from world competition by blocking or heavily taxing imports of specific crops. Behind the protective wall, farmers would have time to develop a local industry and market, and would gradually increase efficiency and production, until they would be able to stand on their own and enter the world market. Then protection could be dropped. In the meantime, though, consumers would suffer because they would have to pay higher prices, and this was often very unpopular. When you are hungry now, it doesn't help to be told that in ten or twenty years the price of food will come down. How did this experiment work out in Belize?[44]

Import Substitution?

During both world wars and the Great Depression, England was worried about its ability to feed its people, and Belize was told that it needed to fend for itself. Mahogany was in a long decline, and there was simply not enough money to keep the high level of food imports. At the beginning of the First World War in 1914, for example, the governor was given power to lease land to farmers, and loan them money to get started. Import duties were raised on luxuries like beer and soda water, and price controls limited the cost of basic foods. "The Dawn of Agriculture" was declared by the weekly *Clarion* and Governor Collett asked all farmers to take part in the war effort by planting more food.[45] The newspaper printed recipes for ways to make bread without flour using ingredients like breadfruit, cornmeal, cassava flour and homegrown yeast.

The result? By 1917 the local markets were full of food imported from the USA, including tins of pate de fois gras and pickled asparagus. The governor was still asking, almost begging, farmers to plant double the normal amount. "There is no reason why the colony should not be able to produce nearly all the food it requires," he said, assigning an Agricultural Commission to find out why imports continued to grow.[46] City dwellers saw some local corn and black beans in the marketplace, which came mostly from Mayan farmers, but things mostly went on as before, as shown in the graph in Figure 7.1. Import levels in 1915 were not much different from those in 1910 and 1921.

During the Great Depression Belizeans were again told it was time to produce their own food. With mass unemployment, poor urban people could not afford imported food, and government food relief was completely inadequate. Logging company employees had to buy their food in company stores, where they had no choice except canned and imported food. The government's strategy to reduce imports was a halfhearted attempt to subsidize farmers. They set up an "Agricultural Board" (later the Marketing Board), essentially a government substitute for a real private market for basic foods. They built two grain drying and storage mills, and started buying rice, corn and beans from farmers at double the international market price. They stored and milled the grain, and then sold it to merchants at cost. The plan was that once the local food industry got going, prices would fall and local rice could compete with imports. This never happened. The other part of the plan was to gradually raise the import duty on rice and beans to make it more expensive, so the local stuff could continue to compete.[47] Of course poor people in the towns and cities had to pay more for rice, local or imported.

Once the government got its foot caught in the "tar baby" of subsidizing food production, it was never able to get out again. Farmers started to depend on the government to buy their rice, corn and beans, so the government could not lower the price without major protests. To keep as much cheap foreign grain as possible

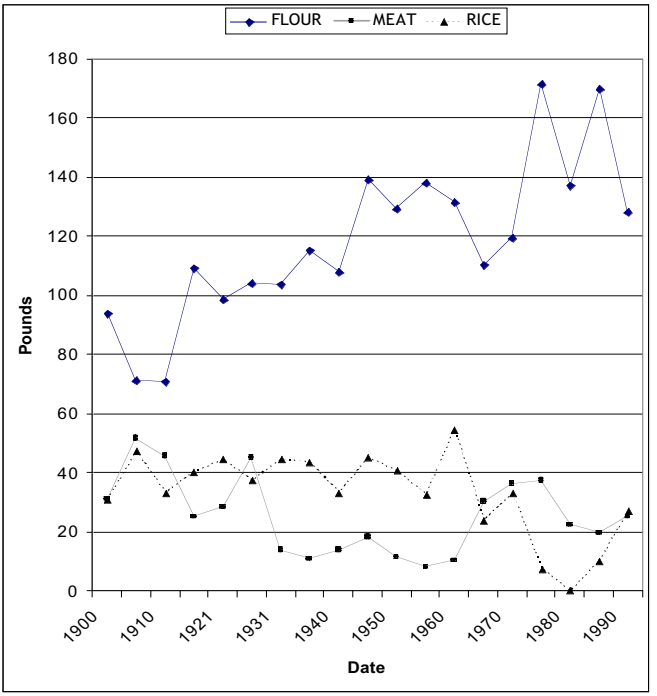


Figure 7.1 Graph showing amounts (in lbs) of wheat flour, meat and rice imported into Belize for domestic use, per capita, in sample years from 1900 to 1995. No records were kept in 1920 and 1930, so 1921 and 1931 are used instead. The war year of 1915 had a decline in meat imports, but rice and flour imports increased.
Source: Government Blue Books and Trade Reports, Archives of Belize.

out of the country the government had to resort to a complicated system of import permits and warrants. They could not always predict how much would be needed, leading to a cycle of gluts and shortages. And the whole system bled money.[48] Instead of competing with each other and becoming more efficient, farmers saw the government price as an entitlement.

Judged on at least the short term, the system did not work very well anyway. In 1936, after four years of operation, the board bought a pitiful total of 87 tons of rice, 42 tons of corn and less than 3 tons of beans! As Figure 7.1 shows, this hardly made a dent in the quantity imported. In the very long term, I suppose it worked, in that Belize finally stopped importing rice in 1974, but ever since then rice has been imported whenever local production fell short of demand.[49] And people constantly complained about the high price and poor quality of the rice they had to buy. Antiquated threshers and driers produced broken and dirty rice, which you had to pour out on a table and "pick" to remove dirt, grit and other seeds. When

clean and whole imported rice came on the market, people flocked to stores to stock up, and were willing to pay a premium over the official price. This kind of experience, more than anything else, drove most Belizean shoppers to equate "local" with "inferior." By the time I did a national survey in 1990, more than 70 per cent of Belizeans agreed that "The things we make here in Belize are mostly inferior to things we import from other countries."

Highly paid foreign technical experts have never been able to show Belizean farmers how to grow rice cheaply enough to compete with imports. In the 1970s, for example, the British built a huge experimental farm with dams and irrigation canals, special planting and harvesting machines, a team of rice agronomists and every possible variety of rice, fertilizer and pesticide. After six years the team gave up and went home, admitting that Maya farmers were already growing corn and beans more efficiently than anything they had found. Of course, that did not kill the idea, and visiting agronomists keep coming up with new farm projects.[50]

The government's choice of crops to subsidize was shaped more by politics than by agronomy or science. They chose long grain rice and red kidney beans, instead of the corn and black beans that were the staple of the surrounding Hispanic countries. The government supported schemes to raise beef cattle, while neglecting the pigs that Mayan and Hispanic farmers raised in such abundance.

Crops were chosen for their *cultural* significance; they marked off Belize as British and Caribbean instead of Spanish and Latin American. Even though a large part of the population *was* in fact Mayan and Hispanic, government agricultural policies made it clear that the Creoles were the dominant ethnic group. A whole economy was built around the idea that Creoles would not eat corn and black beans, which became a self-fulfilling prophecy. It established rice and red beans as the high-status food that all Belizeans aspire to, so that today a vast majority of *Hispanic* Belizeans prefer red beans and rice to the traditional staples of tortillas, tamales and black beans.

The irony is that the Belizean climate and soil are badly suited for red kidney beans and rice, while black beans and corn grow extremely well. For several years in the 1970s the marketing board tried buying black beans – farmers enthusiastically brought thousands of sacks into the buying centers, but urban consumers would not take them even at half the price of red ones. Because the red beans are subject to diseases, local production often fell short. Importers apply for licenses to import beans from the United States; these licenses are like cash and they are useful as political rewards. In years when there is a surplus of local beans, there is no export market because the Caribbean is flooded with cheap, subsidized beans from the USA.[51]

Who Benefits?

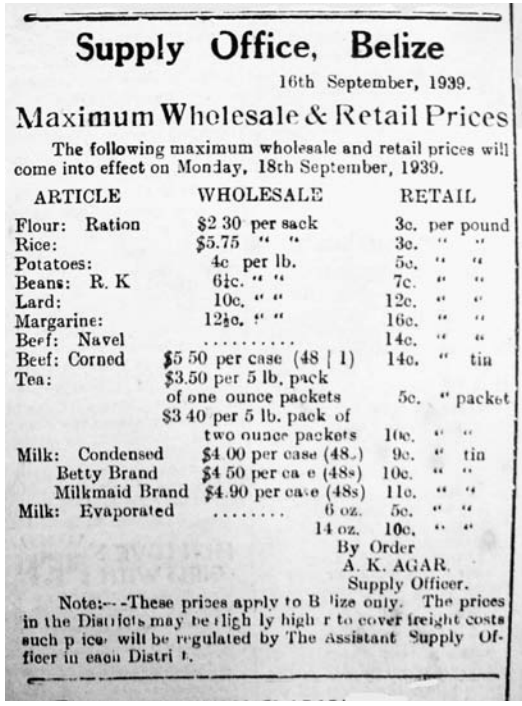
Farmers were certainly helped by the government's import substitution program. Just like subsidy programs in the US and Europe, supported prices gave farmers a reliable target and allowed them to survive if not prosper. But the old Belize City merchant class was cut out of the profits. Price controls on imports guaranteed a fixed margin of profit, but merchants complained about the restrictions. But in the end, import substitution policies actually benefited this class and increased their hold on the economy. How did this happen?

First, import substitution forced them to expand their business interests out of the simple import/retail trade. They began to sell agricultural chemicals and equipment under government regulation or contract. They expanded into local processing and packaging of imports, brewing beer, milling flour, bottling soft drinks, rolling cigarettes and repackaging bulk paper and cleaning products. Beginning in the 1970s, they advertised these imports heavily as "local products" (in fact most of these enterprises were begun only after the government agreed to grant both tax breaks, customs exemptions and protection from imports!). Belikin beer, for example, the "local" brew, dominates the local market, and only competes with imports because it is protected by import duties. The only thing in the bottle that really originates in Belize is the water and some of the sugar, while everything else in the factory, even the electricity to run it, is imported.

The merchants' second response to import substitution was to expand the scale and range of imports, to broaden the market for foods and other products. Right up to the Second World War most importers carried just a few brands in a limited range of product lines. There might be one kind of condensed milk, one variety of soup, two kinds of tinned meat and one of canned fish on the shelves of a store. The only cheese was an old chunk of Gouda on the counter under a glass bowl. You found a pile of potatoes and onions in a box, a few tubs or barrels of salt pork and beef, and sacks of sugar and flour lying around, but not much more. Only two or three big stores in Belize City carried the full range of fancy goods and liquors discussed in Chapter 6.

The Second World War led to some significant belt-tightening in Belize, and again there was a major effort to get local farmers to increase production, and price controls appeared (Figure 7.2).[52] Locally made hot sauce and marmalade appeared on the market, as did recipes for European dishes made with local ingredients.[53] Strict price controls, combined with government control of all imports, quickly led to shortages, made worse by hoarding.

At the same time, many Creoles left the country for work, either in the military, the Panama Canal Zone, the Scottish forestry service or in US factories.[54] Some stayed abroad, forming the first expatriate communities, but most returned, bringing with them new tastes and experiences with food. This is one reason why



Supply Office, Belize

16th September, 1939.

Maximum Wholesale & Retail Prices

The following maximum wholesale and retail prices will come into effect on Monday, 18th September, 1939.

ARTICLE	WHOLESALE	RETAIL
Flour: Ration	$2 30 per sack	3c. per pound
Rice:	$5.75 " "	3c. " "
Potatoes:	4c per lb.	5c. " "
Beans: R. K	6½c. " "	7c. " "
Lard:	10c. " "	12c. " "
Margarine:	12½c. " "	16c. " "
Beef: Navel	.....	14c. " "
Beef: Corned	$5 50 per case (48 | 1)	14c. " tin
Tea:	$3.50 per 5 lb. pack of one ounce packets	5c. " packet
	$3 40 per 5 lb. pack of two ounce packets	10c. " "
Milk: Condensed	$4 00 per case (48s)	9c. " tin
Betty Brand	$4 50 per case (48s)	10c. " "
Milkmaid Brand	$4.90 per case (48s)	11c. " "
Milk: Evaporated	..... 6 oz.	5c. " "
	14 oz.	10c. " "

By Order
A. K. AGAR.
Supply Officer.

Note:—These prices apply to Belize only. The prices in the Districts may be slightly higher to cover freight costs such prices will be regulated by The Assistant Supply Officer in each District.

Figure 7.2 A newspaper announcement of the beginning of price controls in the first weeks of the Second World War, showing the basic staple foods of the colony at the time. The selection of items shows how little the national diet had changed from the ninetenth century. Source: *The Daily Clarion*, September 16, 1939.

1945 was the beginning of a dramatic change in food consumption in Belize. The widespread availability of refrigerators (some running on kerosene) and reliable electrical supply allowed people to buy a whole range of new fresh and perishable foods (Figure 7.3).

During the postwar era American and British food-processing industries turned from wartime production to the invention and marketing of an unprecedented variety of premixed, packaged and prepared foods, what are now called "convenience foods," which quickly found their way into export markets. Instant breakfast foods and a full variety of packaged and processed condiments, cooked foods and beverages tempted Belizean shoppers. As the advertisement in Figure 7.4 shows, a Belize City shopper with enough money could eat imported pepper sauce instead of the local habaneros, plums, figs and fruit cocktail instead of fresh mangos and papaya, and a whole variety of canned and prepared fish instead of fresh snapper and kingfish. For the first time, substantial amounts of frozen meat, especially chicken, began to replace canned and salted meat, and compete with local fresh meats.

"I kept some fresh meat in perfect condition for 11 DAYS"
Although Mr. ..... 's work entails extensive travel in the Belgian Congo, he does not forfeit all the advantages of a settled existence! He is now equipped with an ELECTROLUX—Model L.100, which is sufficiently portable to manage on trek
He says—
"My life in Africa, since I possessed this refrigerator has been completely changed, and I can assure you that it is very pleasant after a journey to be able to eat fresh food and drink iced drinks. It is much more interesting than eating tinned food! As a matter of interest I kept some fresh food for 11 days in perfect preservation!"
In order to transport the above Electrolux safely over this wild country, it was completely boxed in and slung on poles.
No home, particularly in tropical countries, should be without the advantages of modern refrigeration. Electrolux refrigerators are operated by a simple kerosene lamp—no motor or moving parts to go wrong—permanently silent and economical in use.
ELECTROLUX
Kerosene OPERATED
REFRIGERATORS
A demonstration of the advantages of Electrolux will be gladly given at your nearest branch of
The Electrolux Refrigerator is available in 4 sizes with internal capacities of approximately 1, 2, 4 and 5½ cu. ft.
JOHN HARLEY & CO.
AGENTS

Figure 7.3 "It is much more interesting than eating tinned food!" Refrigeration made it possible to import and keep more fresh foods. Kerosene-powered refrigerators were expensive, and initially appealed to expatriate colonial officials, as in this advertisement.
Source: *The Daily Clarion*, September 15, 1939.

Figure 7.5 shows how food imports took off after 1945, but it tells only part of the story. The *variety* of new imports went up faster than the amounts of any one category of food. At the same time, something peculiar is going on with the import substitution project. A glance back at Figure 7.1 shows that meat and rice imports at this time were steady or declining – the result of an increase in local meat and rice production behind the protection of tariffs and price controls put in place during the war. Rice and beans had become the national staple dishes, just as

Figure 7.4 A newspaper advertisement shows that, despite tight import controls and the economic crisis in the British Empire, a wide variety of canned goods were available in the Belize City in the years after the Second World War. Importing hot sauce, allspice and cinnamon into Belize is a bit like bringing the proverbial coals to Newcastle.
Source: *The Daily Clarion*, May 20, 1947.

planned. But just when import substitution is *succeeding*, the amount of food imported is going through the roof! Rice and beans are not even substituting for other starchy staple foods – wheat products jump from 115 lbs per person in 1945 to almost 140 lbs in 1950. These trends continue today – when Belizean farmers produce more food, food imports continue to increase at a faster rate.[55]

To give an illustration of how and why this happens, take cured processed meats like ham, bacon and sausage. These were more expensive than salt pork or canned corned beef, up until the 1950s when they became comparatively cheaper. Refrigerators became common, baked sliced bread more widely available and sandwiches more popular. Imports of processed meat began to rise in the 1950s, doubling from 1955 to 1960, doubling again in the next five years, and again from 1965 to 1970.

A few local farmers saw an opportunity, and started smoking and packaging processed meat, but their products were crude compared to the imports, and were

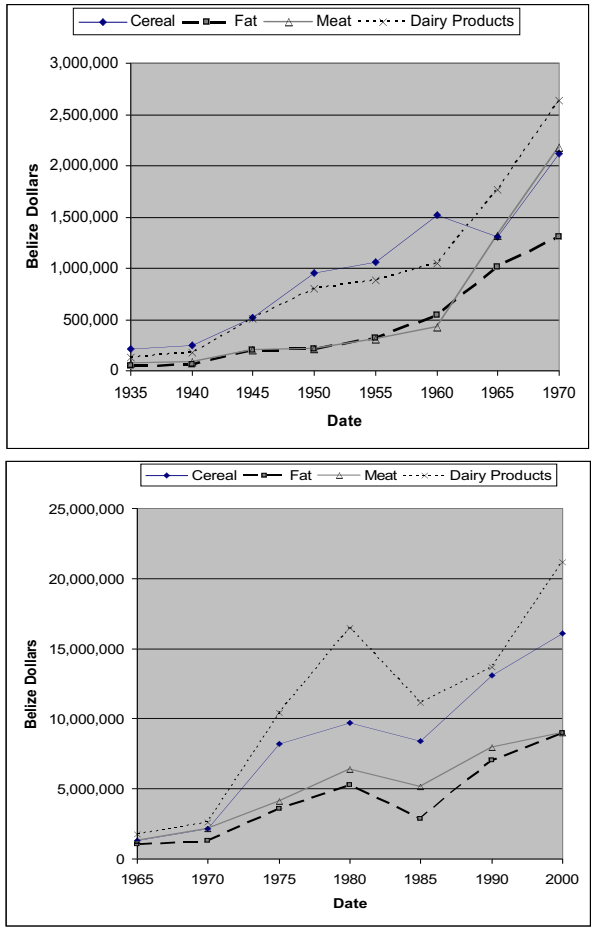


Figure 7.5 Graph showing the value of domestic imports of major foods into Belize, through the Second World War to the present day. The scale in the lower graph is changed because of the huge increase in the import bill. Fat includes edible oils of all kinds, solid and liquid. Cereals includes flour, rice, other grains and baked goods. Initially most of the dairy products were tinned milk and butter, but over time cheese and fresh dairy products increase dramatically.
Source: Government Blue Books and Trade Reports, Archives of Belize.

often more expensive, so shoppers passed them by. Finally in the early 1980s this attracted the attention of USAID and the government. They sent Belizean butchers to the US for training, provided loans so they could buy equipment and eventually financed a testing lab for quality control. A couple from Texas arrived and built a slaughterhouse and packinghouse in competition with the local butchers.[56] By 1990

you could buy two brands of high-quality Belizean salami, bologna, sliced ham, bacon and even pastrami, acceptably packaged and usually cheaper than the imports.

Today these products are available everywhere in Belize, and most Belizeans like them. Once the quality was there, people got over their belief that local goods were inferior, and many people now enjoy the idea of "buying Belizean."[57] The processed-meat industry has been growing steadily. So is this a success story, of import substitution and economic progress? The problem is that the amount (and cost) of imported processed meat has *also* continued to rise. People are eating more local processed meat, but they are also eating more imports.[58] The main reason is simply *variety*. Belize's two or three producers can make a very limited range of products. In the meantime, American consumers can pick from twenty or thirty varieties of bacon: hickory smoked, turkey, thin, slab and even handmade organic bacon smoked over sugar maple by Amish organic farmers. The world's agro-industries pump out a constant stream of new products, and there is just no way any Belizean producer can keep up, even if they can compete on price. In the big supermarkets in Belize City the plain shrink-wrapped Belizean "Running W" brand bacon sits next to four or five American varieties in colorful packages that cost little more. Dak or Tulip brand canned bacon from Europe, because of subsidies, were until recently cheaper than any Belizean bacon, even with import duties added.

The same story can be told about almost every kind of food. As fast as Belizeans can run to catch up by producing their own, the more they are left behind. And the absurdities glare from every store shelf. Local peanut butter in simple plastic tubs gathers mold because shoppers prefer highly processed sugary Skip and Jiffy brands (chunky, light, smooth or premixed with jam). The cost of imported *fish* more than tripled between 1996 and 2001.[59] This in a country where fresh fish is still cheap and abundant! But nobody in Belize makes crunchy frozen fish sticks, or breaded catfish nuggets or pickled herring, and the country has no salmon to smoke. Belizean shoppers are cosmopolitan *world consumers* who watch Mexican and American TV commercials – and there is just no way that this genie of modern food processing, this avalanche of variety, can be put back in an old colonial bottle. Politicians would not survive long in office if they tried.

Mennonites, German-speaking Anabaptist refugees who settled in the country in the 1950s, have been the most successful farmers. They bought huge tracts of land cheaply from the government and by the late 1960s they moved into large-scale commercial production. They began with a feed mill and poultry operation. At the time chicken was a disorganized family business in most of the country and chicken was expensive, a luxury for Sunday dinner. Eggs were imported from the US and Mexico in huge quantities.[60]

The Mennonites saw an opportunity and expanded aggressively, building a retail network by giving merchants freezers in exchange for exclusive distributorships. They gained control of feed concentrate imports with an exclusive license,

Figure 7.6 Delivery truck for Mennonite-produced frozen chickens in 2004. The brand "Dis da fi wi chikin" in Kriol translates literally as "This is our chicken,' with the meaning that this is Belizean chicken, deliberately subduing the ethnic issues with the inclusive "we."
Source: photo by author.

and grew their own corn for feed. By the late 1970s chicken was the cheapest fresh meat, a staple of the diet, but non-Mennonite farmers had been driven out of the market. At this point the Mennonite communities began several small dairy operations, which provided whole milk and later cheese and yogurt nationwide. Mennonite women tried small-scale food processing and canning, and farmers experimented with new crops like peanuts and soybeans. There is no question that these local products have slowed the tide of imports, and made it possible for the government to keep cheap frozen chicken products from the USA mostly out of the market.[61]

Food on the Political Battlefield

Belizean politicians learned about the power of food the hard way. Colonial administrators burned their fingers more than once when they interfered with the flow of imported food, and then they had to bring in troops to deal with riots. When the

empire began to crumble, food policy offered both opportunities and dangers for the nationalists who wanted to take over the country and move towards Independence.

Glimmers of nationalism emerged in Belize as early as the 1930s, among labor unions organizing in the face of unemployment.[62] Mass meetings at the aptly named "Battlefield" Park in Belize City continued through the war years, and ambitious young leaders raised questions about colonial labor laws and the heavy-handed and completely undemocratic system of government. Food policy was a common grievance, since wartime import controls caused shortages and doubled the cost of living.

At the end of the war when the economy in the colony began to improve and American imports were cheap and abundant, the British Empire was economically crippled. England was deeply in debt, constantly short of dollars and had to continue wartime food rationing. The home country called on its colonies for help, and to stanch the flow of dollars to America, in 1947 England put tight controls on all empire commerce, forcing countries to buy their supplies directly from England.[63] In Belize there were immediate shortages and a rapid rise in prices on top of wartime inflation, and empire goods often had to come halfway around the world, like the products in Figure 7.7.

One of the young labor union leaders who spoke at the Battlefield meetings was George Price. In a speech in November of 1947, before a crowd carrying banners that said "down with import controls," he called the regulations an unfair and oppressive burden on the poor of the colony, and said that while they may keep a few dollars in the country, "a bigger quantity of dollars is permitted to leave our country in the form of low cost lumber, sold at high price markets by companies who retain the profits abroad."[64] The governor responded with an appeal to patriotism, in the usual condescending tone.

> When war broke out our people were prepared to serve in the Navy, the Army and the Mercantile Marine … Let us not be any less patriotic now that the United Kingdom is facing as serious an economic crisis as any in her history, but rather let us do all we can to help by going without goods which are not essential … It is a great pity that there are persons whose ill-informed mouthings on the battlefield and elsewhere are listened to by even a few people. I like to believe that these people go to be amused, and not because they believe the nonsense that is aired.[65]

Whatever the governor wanted to believe, these demonstrations marked a new national consciousness in Belize. George Price and the other labor leaders were forcing the fundamental issue of just who the governor's imperial "we" was referring to. Did patriotism mean loyalty to the English, for whom Belizeans had labored and sacrificed for more than 250 years, or could patriotism mean standing up for the rights and interests of Belizeans? When the governor called on "our

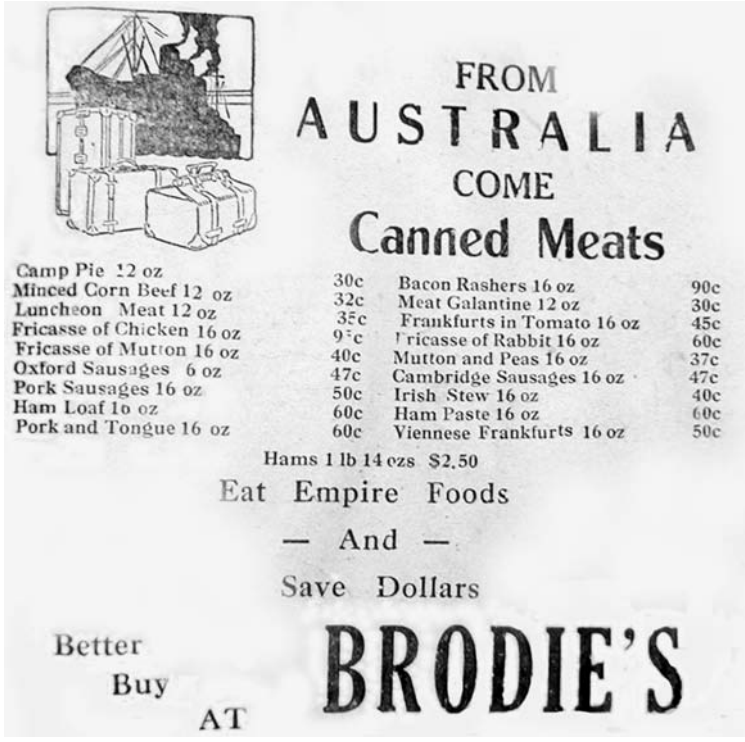

FROM
AUSTRALIA
COME
Canned Meats
Camp Pie 12 oz
Minced Corn Beef 12 oz
Luncheon Meat 12 oz
Fricasse of Chicken 16 oz
Fricasse of Mutton 16 oz
Oxford Sausages 6 oz
Pork Sausages 16 oz
Ham Loaf 16 oz
Pork and Tongue 16 oz
30c Bacon Rashers 16 oz 90c
32c Meat Galantine 12 oz 30c
35c Frankfurts in Tomato 16 oz 45c
9?c Fricasse of Rabbit 16 oz 60c
40c Mutton and Peas 16 oz 37c
47c Cambridge Sausages 16 oz 47c
50c Irish Stew 16 oz 40c
60c Ham Paste 16 oz 60c
60c Viennese Frankfurts 16 oz 50c
Hams 1 lb 14 ozs $2.50
Eat Empire Foods
— And —
Save Dollars
Better
Buy
AT
BRODIE'S

Figure 7.7 A newspaper advertisement telling consumers to "Eat Empire Foods and Save Dollars." After the Second World War import controls forced merchants to import from within the empire, leading to the arrival in Belize of this shipment of tinned meat from Australia. Source: *The Daily Clarion*, November 11, 1947.

people" to make sacrifices, he was claiming that the English and the Belizeans were the same people with the same interests; but Belizeans learned from their treatment in the military during the war that the English hardly thought of them as equals. If they were truly British, why couldn't they vote, read uncensored newspapers or travel freely?[66] Certainly everyone listening to speeches in Battlefield Park saw the hypocrisy of the call for sacrifice, when they knew the *Governor* was not "going without."

The agitation on the Battlefield continued and moved on to other issues. The import controls were gradually loosened through a steady stream of exemptions and licenses, which allowed more and more American products in. The real political crisis did not occur until 1949 when the colonial authorities devalued the Belize dollar by half, to match the devaluation of the pound sterling. This was done by fiat, overriding the vote of the local legislative assembly, contradicting promises from the Minister of State for Colonial Affairs. Devaluation struck the

entire economy when everything imported from the US suddenly doubled in price.

This event sparked the beginning of real opposition party politics in Belize, and it had a direct effect on the relationship between food and national politics. Many Belizean nationalists began to connect independence from England with the freedom to buy from the USA. The demonstrators in Battlefield Park waved the American flag and sang "God Bless America," not just because it annoyed and challenged the British, but also because people wanted cheap American goods in the stores.[67] Political independence meant the freedom to *consume*, and that was an issue that every person on the street could understand, even if they were uninspired by more abstract political rhetoric.

This steered Belize off onto a strange path toward Independence. In many newly independent nations in Africa and Asia, breaking loose from empire meant *decolonization* – leaving European food and fashion behind. In newly independent Ghana, the leaders made a point of serving Ghanaian food at public and state events, and they wanted their people to stop eating European wheat and potatoes. But in Belize, moving toward political independence meant shifting from imported British canned soup to imported American canned soup! When the leaders of the independence movement promised economic progress and prosperity, what many people *heard* was that they would be able to buy "better" food, and "better" meant imported, not local cassava or plantains.

George Price became the most prominent leader of the Independence movement, and when the British established elected popular government in 1961 he became the first Prime Minster as leader of the People's United Party (PUP).[68] Partially inspired by his friendships with leaders of other newly independent nations, Price began a very mild decolonization campaign. Place names were changed: *Mango Creek* became *Independence*; *Pembroke Hall* became *Libertad*. Price discouraged dark wool suits and ties for government officials, and modeled *Guayaberas* and a khaki alternative called a "Belize-Jack."[69] He began to use the term "Belizean" instead of "British Honduran," and deemphasized colonial holidays. Opinions were mixed; some of the changes caught on and others were resisted for a long time. But people mostly went along with the program, until Price thought about decolonizing *food*.

At the beginning of 1964, while the colony was picking a new flag and national anthem, Price gave a series of speeches in Belize City in which he suggested that to become truly independent, Belizeans should consume local foods and drinks.[70] Instead of always thinking foreign was better and copying British cuisine, they should eat local river fish instead of tinned sardines, and drink sweet potato wine and fever-grass tea instead of expensive imports. For many listeners these foods were seen as "bushy" signs of poverty and backwardness, not wealth and progress. Exploiting this vulnerability, the opposition National Independent Party went on

the offensive. Jaime Staines, the first deputy leader of the NIP, gave a speech at a party rally on January 4, saying:

> When the PUP started they promised you ham and eggs, etc., if you put them in power. They also promised you self-government. But today when they get self government, they tell you to boil fever grass and eat pupsi [*sic*] and other river fishes. What will they tell you to eat when they get independence?[71]

The next week the NIP newspaper published a satirical attack on all Price's nationalization policies, and then an editorial called "About this Crana Business."

> With our country building into nationhood, British Hondurans are being asked to work harder and make sacrifices. But just as the strength of an army depends on its stomach, a nation cannot be built on weaklings and invalids. On [*sic*] of the first steps in building this nation should be to raise the wages of manual workers so they can purchase the protective and sustaining foods to equip their bodies to meet the extra demands of higher production.
>
> The human body is like a machine, and it must have fuel to keep it running. And the fuel of the human machine is food, protective and sustaining foods such as milk and other dairy products, eggs, vegetables, fruits, whole grain and enriched bread and other cereals … Food must supply the vitamins needed, along with other essential nutrients such as proteins to keep the body running in high gear … It is obvious that pupsie [*sic*] and crana, which live mostly in polluted swamps, cannot replace, as our premier advises, our sources of vitamin rich food and proteins, the most important ingredients in our diet … Riboflavin, an important vitamin B complex, is found abundantly in wheat germ, whole grain bread and cereal, and in enriched bread and flour, but our Premier tells us to substitute it with corn and pupsie … If water is substituted for fuel in a machine it will shut down. If inferior food is substituted for protective and sustaining food, the human body will cease to function properly. We have been told to forget the Battle of St. George's Caye, now we are told to go back to the past for our food.[72]

The main point is that local food is old-fashioned and primitive. The food to nourish a young nation has to come from modern places. In the newspaper this voice comes from the same insecure middle class that wouldn't eat ground food, lobster or gibnut. But they spoke for a much broader constituency, a nation looking forward to Independence as a time when *everyone* would eat at the "high table." Instead Price seemed to be telling people to be satisfied with poverty instead of improving their lot.

As an astute politician, Price must have recognized that food was not a theme that was boosting his popularity, and he quickly dropped it. The task of nation building moved forward for the next twenty years with hardly a mention of local food by the Prime Minister and his government. When Belizeans finally got around to rethinking and reinventing a national cuisine, as we shall see in the next

chapter, the government played only a minor role. Even today the official government policies about eating more local food sound oddly reminiscent of the same "we must grow more of what we eat" pronouncements that emanated from the colonial authorities for so many years.

> Release from the Government Press Office, March 9, 2004.
>
> Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
>
> Prime Minister Opens Chan Pine Ridge Agriculture Fair
>
> On Sunday, March 7th 2004 Prime Minister Hon. Said Musa traveled to Chan Pine Ridge in the Orange Walk District, where he opened the annual … Agricultural Fair.
>
> The Prime Minister addressed the gathering, saying that the real purpose of an agricultural fair is to give the small farmers an opportunity to display their products, their hard work and for the Belizean people to have an opportunity to see what we can produce in Belize, and to buy Belizean products. He also referred to the fair as an "opportunity to review what we have been doing, to motivate our farmers, increase our production in poultry, in dairy products, in livestock. These are all areas in which Belize still has tremendous growth potential. I call on our farmers, let us continue to work together."
>
> The Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and Orange Walk North Area Representative Hon. Servulo Baeza … gave the fair great importance, not only because agriculture is one of the foundation stones of the nation, but also because many Belizeans look abroad for some of our basic necessities, many of which can be found right here within our borders …

Recipe: "Winter Fruit Salad"[73]

1 small tin pineapple
1 small tin apricots
1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon raspberry jam or red currant jelly
2 oranges
2 bananas
1 lemon

Cut pineapple into small pieces and put into bowl; add apricots, quartered.

Pour juice from both tins into a small saucepan and add one tablespoonful sugar, the tablespoon of jam or jelly and simmer.

Cut oranges into small sections, removing all white pith, and pouring any juice into bowl.

Slice bananas thinly and mix all fruits together in bowl, strain over the syrup from saucepan after reducing it well, and squeeze in lemon.

–8–

Migrants, Tourists and the New Belizean Cuisine

From the Guidebooks:
Belize is not known for its culinary achievements. In fact, its restaurants suffer a dismal reputation among travelers …[1]
No one goes to Belize for the food, and a Belizean cookbook … will be the work of an overzealous patriot rather than a gourmet.[2]
There are relatively few distinctive Belizean dishes, which is why you've probably never heard of any.[3]
… the food in Belize is usually none too elegant and none too cheap …[4]
A walk through any Belizean market with its tiny piles of withered produce (mostly onions, tomatoes, and potatoes), is an accurate representation of the way in which such food is viewed here … all too often what you get is a starchy mass with little in the way of flavor.[5]

A New Kind of Globalization

An older school of folkloric scholars documented "traditional ethnic" foods to record them before they were lost. Cookbook authors appeal to authenticity and expert local knowledge to define the cuisines of the places they portray. A lot of food writing is always wringing hands over the "loss" of authenticity, and the submersion of *real* and *ethnic* food in a globalizing flood of fast food and processed pap.

I do not want to attack the impulse to find quality foods that have a history and a place in daily life. But instead of being frozen in time, I want to show that "local" and "authentic" food are as much creations of modernity as survivors from before it. Authenticity is therefore a problem, not something we can ever depend on as some kind of naturally occurring category. Tradition is crafted, just as much as modernity is manufactured. Looking at food this way is, I believe, actually much deeper, richer and more fascinating than drawing a simple dichotomy between traditional and modern, which leads us into telling boring and hopeless stories over and over again, either the tragedy of loss, or the victory of survival.[6] A sophisticated new social science of food and cuisine asks these more complex questions, and is beginning to find fascinating answers, and popular food

writing has also become much more interested in change instead of just preservation.

Globalization has become the new villain in stories of cultural homogenization and the death of local traditions. Uniformity and mass production were central ideologies in twentieth-century globalization. Especially after the Second World War, economic planners and social theorists believed that the future would see a spreading global uniformity.[7] People would give up their local religions for one of the major world religions. They would drop culturally different forms of music and dress and other expressive culture and become "Westernized" and "Modernized," consuming from the same capitalist cornucopia that was bringing an unprecedented level of luxury to developed countries. Prosperity would bring participation in a global marketplace, which would lead people to desire the products of the most advanced and modern countries. The whole world would drink Coke, instead of thousands of different beverages, each with its own history and taste. Bottled lager would sweep away messy millet or banana homebrews.

The optimistic postwar theorists of modernization saw a simple opposition between modern civilization and primitive cultures. Economic and social progress required the elimination of old ways of doing things, including all those traditional and peculiar customs that people seemed to cling to. In this way, "culture" came to be seen by many as an obstacle to progress, and "modern" "reforming" leaders of developing countries followed the advice of American economists, and set about trying to repress and eliminate all vestiges of conservative, backward "traditional" cultures, especially in their poorest and most isolated regions. The Shah of Iran, for example, declared all local marriage customs illegal, forbade the writing or teaching of languages other than Farsi and required young people to adopt Western dress if they wanted a secondary or college education.

Aggressive efforts to eliminate traditional culture and impose western norms, laws and beliefs created a backlash that was not just confined to poor countries and regions. Even in Europe and North America, people began to express a desire to save disappearing local architecture, music, art and food, and to revive endangered traditional culture. American minority groups began to argue that it should be possible to have economic progress and prosperity *and* cultural pride and distinctiveness, and in the last quarter of the twentieth century, ideas about ethnic and cultural pride, solidarity, autonomy and rights to self-determination were themselves effectively globalized. Around the world, a host of political and religious movements latched onto the idea that the survival of local values depended on fighting off the corrupting evil of Western secular consumerism.

By the turn of the century the whole idea that globalization would, or should, inevitably produce uniformity was being questioned by politicians, academics and citizens around the world. Even economists and marketing professionals had begun to wonder if cultural uniformity was a good thing. In a world where anyone

could build a factory to produce soap or toys or bread, what could give the products of one place an advantage over those made anywhere else, besides simply the lowest price? The much-hyped "new economy," or "experience economy" of the late twentieth century was based more on flexibility, diversity, services and style than on the mass-produced uniformity of the assembly line. Marketers started to realize that culture could sell, that diversity created niches for new products, that even angry and disaffected or poor groups of people could be market opportunities.[8]

Nothing better illustrates the need for cultural diversity in the new global economy than tourism, which became the world's largest single industry in the late twentieth century. It seems likely that the very uniformity of mass consumer culture in rich Western cultures *created* the taste for diversity and exoticism that led to the boom in tourism.[9] Convinced that everything around them was artificial and predigested, millions set out looking for something different and authentic. History, culture and tradition, more than just fun and sun, became commodities sold to tourists. The strange paradox about globalization at the end of the twentieth century was that what was most *global* was the revival and revaluation of the *local*. While at one time it looked like globalization inevitably meant uniformity, now we see that globalization can actually cultivate and promote certain kinds of difference and distinction.[10]

Once we accept that globalization does not automatically mean the end of diversity, we can ask deeper questions about the *kinds* of diversity that will find a place (and a market) in this brave new global era. Some feel that we are poised for a real revival, a cultural flowering where a patchwork of thousands of individual cultures and languages will once again flourish around the globe, as nations gradually wither away and decompose back into cultural fragments. Others, like the French critic Jean Baudrillard, make a distinction between the *authentic* folk cultures of the past, and what they consider fake or Disney-like cultural diversity that is manufactured just as any other commodity to feed the mass market.[11] Like national pavilions at Disneyworld or a world's fair, the new cultural diversity is superficial and sanitized, performed rather than lived.

Hunger for real cultural experiences, for a taste of unique local history, landscape and community, has had a profound effect on attitudes about food. In the rich countries of Europe, and now in the USA, a passion for local and traditional foods has developed, along with a series of new organizations and groups that mix together politics, ecology and a taste for gourmet food. These groups have a broad spectrum of interests, concerns and tactics. Some of the most organized are concerned with health and food safety – fighting genetically modified foods or the use of additives, for example. Environmentalist groups are promoting organic foods, farmers markets and the idea of eating locally in order to support a "sustainable" farm economy. Business and cultural groups have created and supported thousands of

local food festivals, ethnic food pageants and competitions. The slow food movement brings these concerns together with a taste for gourmet cooking, concern for biodiversity and militant opposition to agrobusiness and fast-food outlets.[12]

So far these movements have not spread widely outside Europe and the USA. One of the most important and enduring qualities of globalization is its inequality – the way it looks very different in the rich and poor parts of the world economy. Even in the buccaneer period of globalization, the beef, bread and beer of England and the salt pork, biscuit and rum eaten in the Caribbean were far apart, even though they were intimately connected to each other. Today globalization is having a dramatic effect on the foods eaten in poorer countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and these changes are closely linked to the same processes that spread chain restaurants and microbreweries across North America, but the two faces of globalization still look very different.

The kind of globalization we see today in the poorer parts of the world has its roots in the political struggles for national identity and economic growth that followed the breakup of the colonial empires after the Second World War and the cold war. Belize once again has its peculiarities, and at the same time the changes we see there are typical of the most important ways that food systems have been changing over the last few decades throughout a large part of the world.

Postcolonial Cookbooks

When the European powers started to leave their colonies after the Second World War, their cuisine did not leave with them. Even in countries like Vietnam, Angola and Algeria where local people fought bloody wars to drive the colonialists out, European foods and styles of cooking had a firm grip on people's taste. Even after the French left Togo, for example, all the fancier restaurants served French food. Even if the British were hated and vilified by the new rulers of Ghana, the latter liked to eat European and English dishes when they went out to dine.[13]

In many parts of Asia and Africa, though, the European presence was just a veneer, a crust over local indigenous styles of cooking that had deep historical roots and intimate connections to the landscape. Once the colonists were gone, these traditions began to bubble up and produce new mixtures and hybrids, and many places saw a revival and flowering of local cuisine, often with sponsorship or at least approval from new nationalistic governments. When the colonial lid was taken off, ethnic groups, provinces and regions within the new countries also started to use food as a way to work out their own distinct identity. The British had created a generic "Indian" food, but after Independence the Indians themselves began to relish the great diversity within their country, and a whole series of regional cuisines began to emerge. New cookbooks played a particularly important role by formalizing and identifying regional and ethnic foods.[14]

Cookbooks can work for cooking the way a dictionary and grammar work for a language. If your people speak one of the thousands of languages around the world that have never been written down, it is hard to get people to recognize it and treat it with respect. The government is liable to call it a "dialect" and teach your children something "civilized" instead. As many Native American tribes in the United States have learned, if you want to preserve your language, you need linguists to create a dictionary and a grammar. In the same way, if people want their local sculpture and painting to be recognized as "art," they had better be "discovered" by an art historian who will write a book naming and describing their "style."

Typically, once the language or style has been codified and recorded by an expert, the book itself becomes an authority that begins to change the way people behave. Out of all the possible ways to cook a Yucatecan *pollo pibil*, the few recipes that make it into popular cookbooks become the standard by which others are judged.[15] It is "the right way" to cook the dish. This may not have much effect in rural areas where cooks still learn recipes from their parents in the kitchen, but in cities and more prosperous places where kids are spending their time at school instead of in the kitchen, and they have to rediscover their own traditions later in life, they are liable to consult the cookbook.

Cookbooks are also at the center of all the other things that go into making a recognized cuisine out of all the various things people in a particular time and place are cooking. To complete the whole package you should have some famous cooks, some scholars writing books and papers about local food and history, an annual food festival or celebration, some restaurants or cafes known for their specialties and hopefully some busy newspaper writers or novelists who make food part of their "local flavor."

This pattern of development was pioneered in Europe, first as part of the invention of "national" food traditions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and later when creating regional cuisines. Most of Latin America has been able to follow a similar trajectory, since it has been almost 200 years since they achieved Independence from Spain. Most Asian countries already had elaborate cuisines when Europeans arrived, and it has not been terribly difficult to revive and reinvent them.[16] In most of Africa, and certainly in the Caribbean, however, colonialism cut food culture off from its local roots. As I have shown in previous chapters, the class structure of colonial society worked on the simple equation that foreign is civilized and high class, while local is primitive and represents poverty.

It took Europe more than 200 years to develop the ideas of local, regional and ethnic foods in their modern forms; the ex-colonies have had less than fifty years to follow. Given a world where the international scene is already dominated by European and Chinese food, they could not simply follow in European footsteps, even if they wanted to. The path has been covered up through the passage of time.

In places like Belize, where European food was deeply embedded, and was more than a veneer, national cuisines have been much slower to emerge, and simply publishing local cookbooks has not been enough to change the colonial order of things. When they try to create national cultures and cuisines, ex-colonial countries have to deal with problems the Europeans never faced. They are beginning their work in a world that is economically and politically dominated by superpowers, first two locked in mutual hostility, and now one standing unsteadily on top of the mountain. In this world they don't have the latitude to follow earlier paths to nationalism like throwing out foreign companies, taking over whole industries and seizing land from foreign owners.

In many places Europeans created countries for their own convenience, and left behind artificial nations where different religious and ethnic groups vied for power. Some of the larger federations they tried to create quickly fell apart, leaving microstates with tiny populations. During the cold war period these internal divisions and factional struggles were polarized along East–West lines, so class and ethnic conflicts were supported by one or both superpowers as representing "democracy" or "socialism." Mixing up political ideologies and parties with ethnic, religious and regional divisions has been a recipe for weak states, constantly wracked by internal conflict, unable to forge a national consensus or a national culture that embraces all citizens. What does this do to the idea of a national cuisine?

Through all this turmoil, four basic models[17] emerged in postcolonial food culture, which I label:

- European Crust
- One Ingredient becomes the Whole Meal
- Divided Plate
- Lumpy Stew

When I visited Togo in 1985, I found a good example of the European Crust. Togo has an abundantly rich and varied cuisine, and each of the more than thirty-seven different ethnic groups has its own specialties. On top of the indigenous foods are the legacies of first Danish, then German and finally French colonial rulers. The Danes and Germans left a taste for beer, but French food, like the French language and ideas about government and culture, is the lingua franca accepted by all the different groups. I was astounded, while looking for Togolese street food, to find roadside stands that served cold chicken salad with a crusty baguette, certainly not what I expected in Africa. The restaurants we visited served cosmopolitan French dishes, and even in smaller towns familiar dishes were listed in French on the menu.

Of course in every place if you look hard enough you can find people cooking local dishes, but French food is in all the best hotels and restaurants. What locals

eat is *cooking*, while bread and cheese and even simple omelets are *cuisine*. Instead of fighting over which ethnic group's food should be the national cuisine, all the groups accept French as the cosmopolitan standard. Looking at the ethnic conflicts in neighboring countries, it really does look safer to leave the French crust in place, than to pull it off and contend over a replacement.[18]

French *Grande Cuisine* is recognized around the world as the representative of the whole nation of France. Yet France also has distinctive regional cuisines quite different from those of the upper middle classes in Paris, which have come to represent the whole nation. Throughout Europe the cooking styles of capital cities like London and Moscow served as templates for national distinction, and in the process they muted or even displaced their competitors.

This is analogous to letting one particular ingredient represent the entire meal, like saying one is going out for "a curry." We can see the equivalent in a multiethnic state by looking at a country like Guyana. Barely half the population is of East Indian origin, and foods like curry and *roti* have become the national cuisine. The foodways of African-descended and Native American kitchens are effectively submerged, and are treated as something other than cuisine, mere side dishes at best. As a general rule, the choice of which particular ethnic cooking is going to be elevated to national status reflects who is politically and/or economically dominant. As we have seen, Creole food had some dominance in Belize in part of the colonial era.

As a child, when I ate in my elementary-school cafeteria, we were served on molded plastic plates that were divided into three dish-like compartments, one larger than the others. The plates physically represented the dominant New England Protestant conception of a meal, which should have a large portion of meat or another main dish, and smaller amounts of starch (usually mashed potatoes at my school) and vegetable (boiled or creamed). If the different servings mixed or ran together, most of my schoolmates considered the lunch disgusting and inedible.[19]

In the same way, a country can give up on the idea of a unifying nationalized cuisine, and opt instead for something like a multicultural rainbow. Each group will develop its own ethnic or regional identity, its own special language or dialect, dress, music, favorite dance and distinctive dishes. This is quite different from the kinds of regionalism that exist in older nations like France or even the United States, where we can distinguish varieties like southern food, soul food and a host of immigrant cuisines, since all these have become in some sense common property within a matrix of common shared foodways.

In Nigeria more than a century of colonial administration broke the country up into discrete ethnic groups, each with territory and styles of government, and sometimes even their own system of law. Some of these groups existed as kingdoms or chiefdoms before the British arrived, but others took shape and firmed

their boundaries under the tutelage of colonizers. The colonists were really the only force holding 350 ethnic groups together and calling them a nation; the transition to Independence was short and confused, and the British never quite managed to make their own food into a common "crust."

The result is that there is no Nigerian national cuisine. The staple food is yams in some areas, and cassava, corn, millet and rice in others. While there have been some movements toward fusion in the cities, most restaurants serving African food can be identified by region and often ethnicity and religion. Even Nigerian migrants in Europe and America have been very slow to put together a composite set of national dishes, since it is so hard to please Igbo, Fulani and Yoruba (the largest ethnic groups) all at once.

None of these three possibilities (crust, one dominates, divided plate) quite describes what has happened in Belize. European cooking that was so dominant in the early 1900s has been through the creolization processes described in Chapter 6, so Belize is not like Togo. Some have felt that Creole culture was becoming the dominant national regime.[20] But the boundary between Hispanic and Creole culture has softened over time, and Belize is not really like Guyana. Some Belizean ethnic groups began, around the time of Independence, to assert their ethnic rights. Some predicted the nation would break up into hostile and independent cultural enclaves through an "ethnic war."[21] But the country was never close to the extremes of "divided plate" countries like Nigeria.

"Lumpy Stew" may be the best way to describe the relationship between ethnic and regional styles of cooking and the mixed and creolized traditions that encompass the whole nation. The term also expresses something of the Belize government's official cultural policy, which has followed the line recently stated by Prime Minister Musa: "Culture is at the heart of our development. Ours is not a monoculture, but a diverse one where many groups are striving to make unity of this diversity to bring about the unique Belizean identity."[22] In this vision, the national culture is like a broth made of the mixed essences of all the separate ingredients: it is the unifying flavor that harmonizes the separate lumps. Mestizo, Garifuna, Creole and Mayan food and culture are still identifiable, but they also merge into each other.

But remember the reaction to Price's 1964 "pupsi and crana" speech, and those nervous smiles in response to my search for Belizean food. They exposed a deep ambivalence toward local food. It was much easier to think about developing Belizean dance, music, literature and ethnic costume than it was to imagine Belizean cuisine. How did this change?

The Legacy of Colonialism: Cultural Ambivalence

The paradox of simultaneous love and hate of imports, of public condemnation and private desire, emerged as a common theme in my research in Belize. Housewives

would lecture me on the need to support Belizean farmers, and then serve me imported ham. Shopkeepers would walk down aisles of imported canned goods, extolling the virtues of local fruit wines lingering on a dusty shelf behind the counter. Farmers apologized for serving venison and homegrown rice, and then made fun of emigrants who had become so Americanized they had forgotten how to eat local fish.

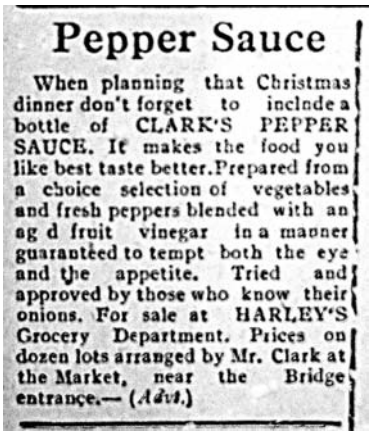
The mixing of messages is nicely juxtaposed on the front page of the conservative newspaper, *The Clarion*, on July 18, 1950. The headline reads "If World War III Comes," and the story laments that the country is so dependent on imports that in the case of a nuclear war in the USA, the country would starve, even though there is plenty of farmland. Just below the story is a half-page advertisement that reads "Delicious and Tasty! That's what you'll say when you try our cooked hams, packed in 1/2 kilo and 1 kilo tins. Of the shipment that arrived very recently there are only a few tins left … "

Even at the height of British cultural dominance, local pride coexisted with the passion for everything imported. Amidst the formal tea parties and ice-cream socials, groups also performed "Creole plays" and recitations of Creole stories, and published pamphlets of the trenchant local proverbs. Parties from the city would spend holidays and weekends at fishing and hunting camps, enjoying rural food and life in an informal atmosphere. As the grip of colonial power started to loosen at the beginning of the Second World War, public attitudes toward local culture and food began to change. At the beginning of the war a letter to *The Daily Clarion* suggested:

> There is no reason why ceremonial dinners should not include a large proportion of Creole food. There is nothing like setting good examples. It ought to be fine fun and good local patriotism if some of us join up in clubs for the purpose of competing in the giving of dinners, all the dishes of which are local products.[23]

A local cookbook, probably the first, was published by the government's "War Effort Committee" to encourage city dwellers to use local fruits and vegetables.[24] The war emergency provided opportunities for enterprising businesses. Makers of "sparkling waters" and ice cream began to advertise their products as "freshly made here," and in 1945 a locally processed "Clark's Pepper Sauce" appeared. Local taste surfaced, since no imported hot sauce satisfied the Belizean taste for fiery orange habanero peppers.[25]

Enthusiasm for Creole food faded after the war, but the idea for a locally bottled pepper sauce had been planted. Eventually, Melinda's habanero hot sauce became the first Belizean-labeled product that was widely available in supermarkets in the USA.[26] It says a great deal about Belizean ambivalence toward local products that it was not really accepted in the *local* market until it had been successful in the United States, and Belizean visitors saw Americans buying it in supermarkets. A



Pepper Sauce

When planning that Christmas dinner don't forget to include a bottle of CLARK'S PEPPER SAUCE. It makes the food you like best taste better. Prepared from a choice selection of vegetables and fresh peppers blended with an ag d fruit vinegar in a manner guaranteed to tempt both the eye and the appetite. Tried and approved by those who know their onions. For sale at HARLEY'S Grocery Department. Prices on dozen lots arranged by Mr. Clark at the Market, near the Bridge entrance.— (*Advt.*)

Figure 8.1 The first local food product advertised in a Belize City newspaper – a pepper sauce probably made with the local favorite orange habaneros.
Source: *The Daily Clarion*, December 19, 1945.

joke circulated in Belize in 1990, concerning a woman who went shopping across the Mexican border in Chetumal, where she saw Melinda's on the shelf and thought it looked nice. So she bought ten bottles and brought them back, paying a heavy import duty at the border; she was home before she found out it was made in Belize.

This deep and complex mixture of local pride with a preference for anything foreign is reflected in the way so many Belizean businesses have tried to draw on the prestige of foreign brands to sell local products and services. One could shop at *Wellworth*, *Bloming Dale's*, *Home Depot* or *K-Mart* for a *Butterbell* turkey, lunch at *Bel Taco*, smoke *Winsome* cigarettes in a red and white package and spend the night at the *Hill Town* or *Hi-Et* hotels.[27]

The first popular Belizean cookbooks, like that by the Belize Hospital Auxiliary in the late 1970s, send the same mixed messages. Alongside typical Creole dishes like stewed conch with dumplings and escabeche (a delicious sour soup of baked chicken and stewed onions in vinegar and black-pepper flavored broth), there are recipes for lobster thermidor, Swedish casserole, Greek moussaka and Korean bulgogi. There is even an American cream of mushroom soup and tuna dish, called "Cream of the Sea," which would be hard to imagine on a rural or working-class Belizean table.[28] The book does tell you how to stew an iguana and stuff a gibnut, but the civilized foreign food numerically drowns out the local message.

The government and George Price did not remain completely silent in fear of a backlash against local food, though their efforts were muted and were often provoked or funded by foreign agencies. Throughout the 1970s Price held lunches at his official residence for local dignitaries and leaders with a menu of Belizean products.[29] The Ministry of Education also held "local food lunches" in the capital city for government ministers and officials to try to get them accustomed to eating Belizean food in public "without shame."[30]

The juxtaposition of patriotism with cynicism about local products was a headache for businesses trying to process and package for the Belizean market. One solution was to try to make a product seem *both* local and foreign at the same time. Lily bath soap, made in a shiny new factory near Orange Walk, was introduced in 1989. The radio and television ads boasted that Lily was a "proud product of Belize" and in the same breath that it was "made from the finest European soap noodles." Most of the shoppers I talked to, though, complained about the poor packaging and the strong perfume and said they preferred American soap if they could afford it.

Even government efforts to promote local food and farming sent mixed messages. Every year at the Belize Agricultural Show, the government chooses a "farmer of the year" to promote agriculture as a national priority. As usual in 1990, they chose a small family farmer, who was praised over national radio for his contribution to Belizean self-sufficiency, for feeding the nation and for his pride in his country. His prize was a round-trip air ticket to Miami, as if the best reward for helping the country was leaving it.

One prominent education project in the 1980s was called REAP, funded and staffed initially by a foreign charitable group, CARE. The goal was to teach better farming methods and the basics of nutrition to primary school students, and schools planted some local foods in their gardens. The lessons, though, taught students to make European-style vegetable gardens with neat rows and furrows, which tended to wash away in heavy tropical rain, instead of Belizean gardens that cover the ground with a mix of roots, vegetables, plantains and fruits. Like American young farmer programs, they tried to teach students to grow champion beets and raise fat rabbits, though nobody knew how to cook them.[31]

In the 1960s and 1970s, an increasing number of Belizeans went to the USA and England for higher education. Many never returned home, but those who went back had a very different view of their own country. Seeing that America was not the utopia they had imagined was a shock, and it made some feel that the ethnic equality and harmony in Belize was precious and important. A prominent newspaper editor told me that his involvement in the Black Power movement in college prompted his first thoughts of Belizean nationalism, and that when he came back he was appalled at the slavish way people copied ideas and fashions from the USA.[32] Others I interviewed complained that when they came back they saw that Belize was stuck in a "slavery mentality."

Some of these returnees tried to find ways to get Belizeans to show more pride in their local culture, to be less blind in their admiration of all things foreign. Ronald Clarke, Chief Information Officer, saw how "Carifesta" promoted Caribbean culture in other countries, and then helped put Belizean foods on display and sale at a "Festival Grand Market" during the National Day celebrations in 1977.[33] Just seeing their own familiar foods displayed with pride, instead of

embarrassment or shame, made a strong impression on many who attended. Another educator, Inez Sanchez, tirelessly traveled the country talking to students and their parents about the need to have pride in their own traditions and cultures, including their cuisine.

The most influential cookbook of the 1980s, *A Guide to Belizean Cooking*, was assembled by the government's Social Development Department (with help from Peace Corps volunteers and the University of Michigan). It included foreign dishes, but it was also full of rural recipes written down for the first time. The foreword says "It is hoped that the use of this text will further encourage the greater use of locally grown foods, promote improved nutrition, and encourage people to be proud of their Belizean heritage and culture."[34]

It is hard to find any concrete evidence that these devoted efforts by Belizean nationalists in the 1970s and early 1980s made a lot of difference in people's actual diets. I saw something of their frustration when I went to a reception in 1989 for the daughter of a prominent Belizean nationalist who was getting married. The dinner menu featured American Butterball turkey, Honey-Baked ham, Stove-Top stuffing, white-bread sandwiches filled with canned Armor Deviled Ham and Hellman's mayonnaise, potato salad and almost as an afterthought a small scoop of Belizean rice and beans. When I cornered the father a few days later and asked about the menu, he explained that *he* would have preferred Creole and Spanish dishes, but his wife insisted on the imported menu because "she didn't want to embarrass the daughter in front of all her friends."

The idea that imported food was "better" than local was still firmly rooted, and did not yield to these first few tugs. It took *more globalization* to bring local food out of the kitchen and put it at the center of Belizean local identity.

The Royal Rat: Pride in Local Food

Belizeans of the right age remember 1980, the year before Independence, as a turning point in foreign influence on Belizean culture, or as one friend put it, "the beginning of the invasion." That year a Kentucky Fried Chicken opened in the busiest part of downtown Belize City, attracting crowds of curious diners eager to try an authentic American treat.[35] Shortly afterward, television finally arrived in Belize, when a local entrepreneur began to rebroadcast signals he pirated using a satellite dish in his backyard. Until that moment, only rich Belizeans who could afford VCRs and tapes could watch TV.[36] A wave of excitement passed through the capital city "like a heady wine," a feeling that some called "freedom" and others labeled "Television Mania."[37] Within months stations and cable systems began to spread around the country. The Minister of Education, Said Musa (Prime Minister since 1998), claimed that television was more dangerous than an "invading army of ten thousand soldiers." The Catholic Church decried the flood of "immorality"

in American programs, while Belizean nationalists mourned the Americanization of the country, predicting that baseball would kill cricket and turn the country into no more than a poor suburb of Los Angeles.

Instead of cultural decay, I found something quite different when I actually listened to what people had to say about television. Before TV many people had images of America as the land of wealth and dreams, but a full blast from the satellite left them with a more sober and critical view. A lot of people were appalled or even disgusted by American morals, commercialism, crime and poverty. Seeing America made many people think about what a nice, slow-paced and peaceful place Belize really was. I was especially surprised when teenage high-school students told me the same thing in a series of surveys and interviews. While many loved Michael Jordan, and hungered for American music and fashions, they also said that watching American TV made them feel more patriotic and Belizean. Instead of sweeping Belizean culture away, TV was actually making people more conscious of their own Belizean-ness.[38]

One of the strange phenomena that developed in the early television years was the relationship between Belize and the Chicago Cubs baseball team. WGN, a satellite station from Chicago, provided the first live sports seen on TV in Belize, and the whole country started to become fans of the perennial underdog Cubs team. Knowing their families at home were watching, Belizeans living in Chicago started carrying Belize flags and banners to Cubs games, and the TV announcers noticed and started talking about the country during games. When the Cubs played in the 1984 division championship, Belize completely shut down during each of the games. That summer, in appreciation of their new fans, members of the team visited Belize, and the largest crowds in history turned out to their parade through town, larger than the crowd that turned out for the Pope's visit the previous year!

The sense that Belize was finally being recognized on the world stage brought out a lot of national pride. This was put on display during the first visit of a reigning English monarch in 1985. Queen Elizabeth's stopover came at a diplomatically important time, reassuring Belizeans that the British Army would continue to protect the country from an increasingly hostile Guatemala.[39]

A banquet was held for the Queen at the residence of the British High Commissioner in Belmopan. The commissioner's cook, Aurora Mendez, prepared a selection of Belizean delicacies, including a main course of stuffed, roasted gibnut.[40] The Queen, of course, is a veteran of countless official banquets and inedible feasts, and she made no particular remark about the food except to praise the cook. The story would have ended there, but for the royal-entranced British tabloid press.

The following day *The Sun* and other London papers carried outraged headlines, on the theme of "Queen Served Rat by Savages." The stories accused Belizean cooks of conspiring to slip a disgusting rat onto the royal plate, blaming ignorance

and stupidity (with racial connotations), or a deliberate attempt to insult the government. They kept artificial outrage brewing for several days with angry letters from concerned citizens who were upset by this attack on the dignity of the sovereign.

The headlines quickly got back to Belize, where local newspapers reproduced them along with angry comments. Some columnists tried to explain that this was a factual misunderstanding; while the gibnut was a rodent, it was *not* a rat. But most writers, and popular opinion, saw the British newspaper headlines as arrogant and racist. For the first time, the gibnut came in for public praise. Nutritionists wrote to say that the gibnut was healthful, an important source of protein. Letters from rural cooks praised the flavor of gibnut, and restaurants in Belize City featured it on the menu under the label "Royal Rat" (a label it still retains).

The idea that a "bush" food like gibnut could become a matter of national pride, even something like a national dish, was revolutionary. Gibnut was never quite as low in status as the famous pupsy and crana, but it was not what Belizeans would call a "high table" food like turkey and stuffing either. The incident of the royal rat came at a crucial time when Belize was suddenly entering the world stage. The irony is that it took a flood of foreign influence, a consequence of a new kind of globalization, to provoke the local reaction. And the pace of globalization was just beginning to take off in little Belize.

The Tastes of Belizean-Americans

One of the most often cited symptoms of globalization is an increase in migration, particularly people fleeing poor countries in search of jobs and better lives in richer parts of the world. While people in the Caribbean have always been more mobile than most, they have migrated to richer countries to the north in huge numbers over the last half century. The first waves from the English-speaking Caribbean, just after the Second World War, were aimed mostly toward Britain, but the main path for Caribbean migrants then shifted to the big eastern cities of the USA and Canada, and then to California and the Midwestern states.

Nobody knows exactly how many Belizeans live legally and illegally in the USA. The best estimate in 1990 was about 60,000, a substantial number for a country with only 184,000 at home.[41] The same year my survey of high-school students showed that 44 percent had an immediate family member – a parent or sibling – living abroad, an extraordinary number at that time. The students themselves were also well traveled – three-quarters of them had been outside of Belize for more than a day trip, and more than one in ten had lived in another country for more than a year. The stream of migrants has continued: in 2000 between 100,000 and 150,000 Belizeans lived in the USA. Los Angeles is probably the largest Belizean city in the world, its Belizean inhabitants outnumbering those left behind

in Belize City. Chicago, New York, Houston and Miami also have sizeable Belizean colonies.[42]

Belizeans differ when they talk about how migration affects the home country.[43] It certainly has changed the ethnic balance, because large numbers of Creole and Garifuna have left, while many refugees and poor migrants from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras have moved to Belize. Spanish-speakers now outnumber Creoles, thus changing the character and politics of the country in a number of ways. The economic impact of migration has also been clear-cut. Educated professional people find few opportunities in Belize and spend most of their careers abroad, and this brain drain deprives Belize of crucial expertise. On the other hand, the money that hard-working Belizean migrants send home keeps the entire economy afloat.

The cultural effects of Belizean migration are not so straightforward. When Belizeans first started to arrive in New York in the late 1960s, they found themselves thrust into a cauldron of ethnic and cultural politics. Political and economic survival in the city depended on ethnic coalitions and blocks, which could work through churches and political organizations to get jobs, housing, and welfare benefits. Like many Caribbean immigrants, Belizeans worked hard to distance themselves from African-Americans, identifying themselves as English and Caribbean, rather than black. Caribbean people tended to cluster together in particular neighborhoods in Brooklyn, where Jamaicans were the largest and most influential group, and people from the smaller countries often felt lost.[44]

Despite their shared cultural background from a history as British slave colonies, the communities were divided. The flowering of reggae music, and Caribbean carnival festivals did draw Caribbean people together. But the very same context brought out differences as well as similarities. Trinidadians favor their calypso and Antiguans prefer soka to reggae. Jamaicans shunned the souse and black pudding loved by Barbadians, in favor of patties and jerk chicken. People were "Caribbeans" on the surface – but at another level each group found and even emphasized its own uniqueness.[45]

When I interviewed Belizeans who had lived in the United States, one of the most common things they said was that they did not discover their identity as Belizean until they lived abroad. Only when surrounded by Americans and other Caribbean people did they start to understand just how unique and different a place Belize really was. One of the things they particularly missed was Belizean food. Like many migrants, they went to great lengths to find the ingredients they needed for their favorite dishes, often searching oriental groceries for coconut milk and cocoyam.

People begged friends or relatives traveling from Belize to bring dozens of their favorite meat pies, Creole buns, coconut tarts, dukunu and powder buns. Suitcases bulged with gifts of stewed cashew fruit, preserved craboo, bottles of sorrel wine

and favorite candies like *tableta*, *stretch-mi-guts* and *cottobrute*.[46] In the cold winters of New York and Chicago, Belizeans became nostalgic for the taste of foods they did not have to look for at home. In Belize they would rather drink rum from Barbados or Jamaica instead of the local stuff, but a Belizean party in Chicago would not be complete without Caribbean, One-Barrel or Traveler's from home. I heard of one man who managed to get a suitcase full of live Hicatee (river turtle) through customs, so his friends could enjoy hicatee and rice for Easter. Here is Evan X Hyde, thinking about home on Spanish Cay during the pale winter of Hanover, New Hampshire in 1966:

> Steal coconuts, catch the running crabs at night, crab soup with matilda foot, sere, fish tea with cubali head and onions, black pepper, habanero, fresh corn, barra boil up with coconut oil, fat pork and onions on yams, coco, cassava, sweet potato, cho-cho, green banana and green plaintain.[47]

By 1972 there was a "Belize Bar and Grill" in Brooklyn where you could drink a cold Belikin beer and order a plate of rice and beans. During the 1980s Belizeans opened more restaurants in Los Angeles, the New York area and Chicago, which became centers for Belizean communities, places where people could publicize and organize cultural, religious and political meetings, musical performances, festivals and beauty pageants. These restaurants were the public face of Belize to America, and for many visitors they were the first place they had even heard of Belize.

Opening a foreign restaurant in the United States always requires difficult decisions, balancing the cost and availability of ingredients, and choices between serving the general American public and the community from home, which have very different needs.[48] Old recipes for home kitchens and family meals have to be changed and simplified to work in a restaurant kitchen where food has to be ready quickly. Most important of all, the restaurant cook has to choose just a small sample of the many different regional and ethnic dishes and beverages made in the home country, and present those in a way that is different enough to be exotic and familiar enough to be comfortable. It is tough to simultaneously fulfill the nostalgic memory of a Belizean grandmother, and satisfy the taste of a yuppie Chicago suburbanite for something new and exotic, and still make a profit.

The menu from Tickie's Restaurant in Chicago shown in Figure 8.2 comes down firmly on the side of serving a taste of home to Belizeans, rather than a casual walk-in American customer. It includes some of the urban Creole dishes that have a special place in Belizean life. Conch and cowfoot soup were weekend foods at home; conch soup to boost men's sexual performance before a party, and cowfoot soup to help settle a hangover the next morning. The selection of desserts, stewed meats with rice and beans, fried fish, snacks and drinks are mostly typical of the

BREAKFAST

All Breakfast Served With Fried Beans & Advocado. Your Choice Of

JORNEY CAKE $0.25
FRY JACK $0.50
TORTILLA $0.50
HASH FISH $5.50
LIVER $5.00
CHICKEN $5.00
BEEF $5.50

DINNER

All Dinner Served With Red Beans & Rice or Stew Beans & Rice, Potato Salad & Fry Plantain

CHICKEN $7.00
(Fried & Stewed In Heavy Gravy)
STEW BEEF $7.00
(Fried & Stewed With Vegetable In Heavy Gravy)
OXTAIL $7.00
(Fried & Stewed With Vegetable In Heavy Gravy)
SHORT RIBS $7.00
(Fried & Stewed With Vegetable In Heavy Gravy)

SEA FOOD DISHES

KING FISH $7.50
(Deep Fried & Served With Tomatoes & Onion Sauce)
RED SNAPPER $9.00
(Deep Fried & Served With Tomatoes & Onion Sauce)
SERNE $7.50
(Deep Fried Fish Cook In Coconut Milk & Ground Food Served With White Rice)

SOUP

COW FOOT SOUP $8.00
(Cow Foot & Tripe Boiled Until Tender With Vegetable & Ground Food)
CONCH SOUP $8.50
(Belizean Shell Fish Boiled Until Tender With Vegetable & Ground Food)

APPETIZERS

CONCH FRITTERS $0.75
(Ground Conch With Heavy Spice Fried In Vegetable Oil To Crisps)
CHICKEN TAMALES $2.00
(Season Corn Masa With Stew Chicken & Spicy Filling Wrap Together & Boiled To Perfection)
PORK TAMALES $2.25
(Season Corn Masa With Stew Pork & Spicy Filling Wrap Together & Boiled To Perfection)
SALBATUS $1.00
(Soft Deep Fried Masa With Chicken & Vegetable Sauce Topping)
DUKUNU $1.50
(Green Corn Tamales Boiled To Perfection)
PANADES $0.50
(Corn Masa With Fish Filling & Deep Fried)
GARNACHES $0.75
(Deep Fried Corn & Tortilla Topped With Refried Beans, Spicy Onion Sauce & Cheese)
MEAT PIES $0.75
(Flour Dough Filled With Spicy Ground Beef In Sauce Bake To Crisp)

DESERT

LEMON PIE $1.00
BREAD PUDDING $1.00
POTATO PUDDING $1.00
MILK CAKE $1.00
JAM ROLLS $0.75
POWDER BUN $0.75
TART $0.50

BEVERAGES

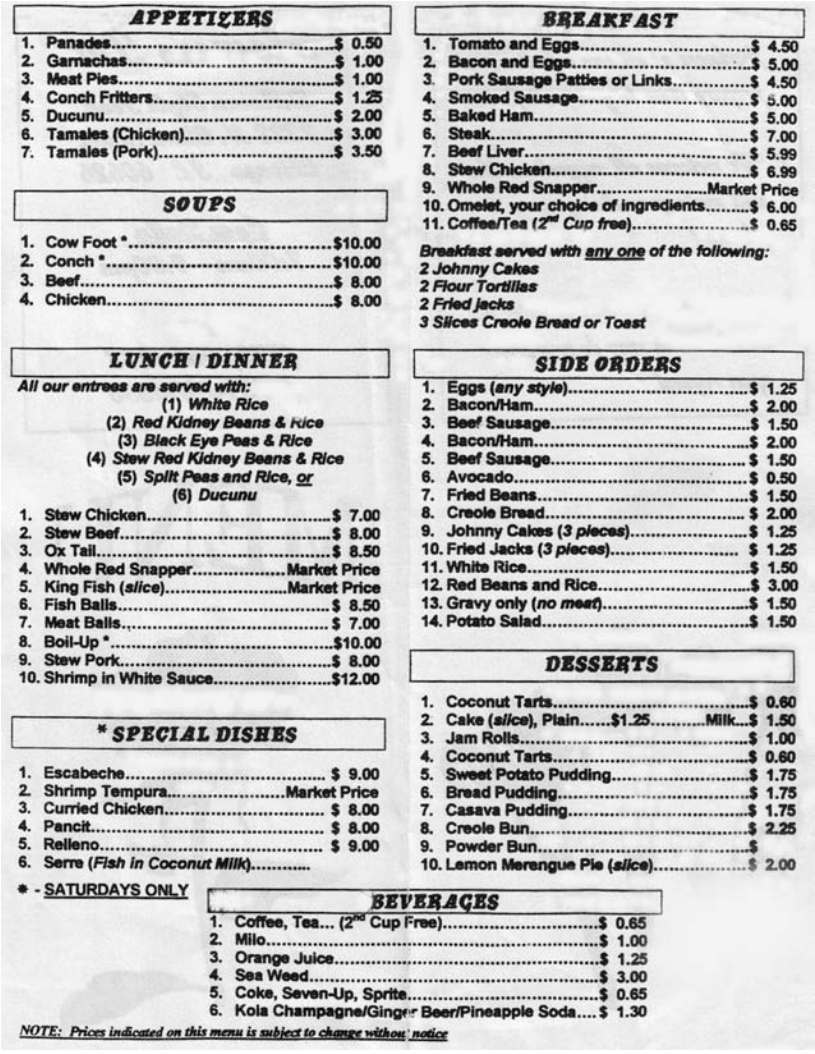
COCO RICO $0.75
COLA CHAMPAGNE $1.00
GINGER BEER $1.00
SEA WEED $2.50
ORANGE KOLA $1.00

Figure 8.2 Menu from Tickie's Restaurant in Chicago, from 1999; it would not be out of place in a Belize City restaurant.
Source: collection of the author.

kind of food eaten every day in Belize City homes. Absent from the menu are some common dishes that have an association with poverty and rural life, like split-pea soup with pigtail and dumplings, boil up and matilda foot.

The menu from Flower's Pot Restaurant in Chicago is also designed to please a Belizean customer. It features a broader selection of dishes, including Hispanic escabeche and relleno, and working-class food like boil up and split peas. The only things I see on this menu that are *not* typically Belizean are shrimp tempura, pancit (a Philippine noodle dish) and the shrimp in white sauce (Italian?). While most of the main meat dishes would be fairly straightforward to an American diner, many other items on the menu would require some explanation.

Belizean-American restaurants through the 1980s and 1990s served dishes familiar to any native of the country (with a bias towards Creole, rather than Latin dishes). The crucial difference between what was on the menu in Chicago and in a hundred restaurants in Belize City had nothing to do with the flavor or ingredients. The key was entirely in the meaning and significance of the menu. Only in America did this selection of dishes bear the label *Belizean food.* In Belize it was still just "what people ate" with no particular meaning at all. Back at home it was just part of



APPETIZERS

1. Panades.....$ 0.50
2. Garnachas.....$ 1.00
3. Meat Pies.....$ 1.00
4. Conch Fritters.....$ 1.25
5. Ducunu.....$ 2.00
6. Tamales (Chicken).....$ 3.00
7. Tamales (Pork).....$ 3.50

SOUPS

1. Cow Foot *.....$10.00
2. Conch *.....$10.00
3. Beef.....$ 8.00
4. Chicken.....$ 8.00

LUNCH / DINNER

All our entrees are served with:
(1) *White Rice*
(2) *Red Kidney Beans & Rice*
(3) *Black Eye Peas & Rice*
(4) *Stew Red Kidney Beans & Rice*
(5) *Split Peas and Rice, or*
(6) *Ducunu*

1. Stew Chicken.....$ 7.00
2. Stew Beef.....$ 8.00
3. Ox Tail.....$ 8.50
4. Whole Red Snapper.....Market Price
5. King Fish (*slice*).....Market Price
6. Fish Balls.....$ 8.50
7. Meat Balls.....$ 7.00
8. Boil-Up *.....$10.00
9. Stew Pork.....$ 8.00
10. Shrimp in White Sauce.....$12.00

*** SPECIAL DISHES**

1. Escabeche.....$ 9.00
2. Shrimp Tempura.....Market Price
3. Curried Chicken.....$ 8.00
4. Pancit.....$ 8.00
5. Relleno.....$ 9.00
6. Serre (*Fish in Coconut Milk*).....

* - SATURDAYS ONLY

BREAKFAST

1. Tomato and Eggs.....$ 4.50
2. Bacon and Eggs.....$ 5.00
3. Pork Sausage Patties or Links.....$ 4.50
4. Smoked Sausage.....$ 5.00
5. Baked Ham.....$ 5.00
6. Steak.....$ 7.00
7. Beef Liver.....$ 5.99
8. Stew Chicken.....$ 6.99
9. Whole Red Snapper.....Market Price
10. Omelet, your choice of ingredients.....$ 6.00
11. Coffee/Tea (2nd Cup free).....$ 0.65

Breakfast served with <u>any one</u> of the following:
2 Johnny Cakes
2 Flour Tortillas
2 Fried Jacks
3 Slices Creole Bread or Toast

SIDE ORDERS

1. Eggs (*any style*).....$ 1.25
2. Bacon/Ham.....$ 2.00
3. Beef Sausage.....$ 1.50
4. Bacon/Ham.....$ 2.00
5. Beef Sausage.....$ 1.50
6. Avocado.....$ 0.50
7. Fried Beans.....$ 1.50
8. Creole Bread.....$ 2.00
9. Johnny Cakes (*3 pieces*).....$ 1.25
10. Fried Jacks (*3 pieces*).....$ 1.25
11. White Rice.....$ 1.50
12. Red Beans and Rice.....$ 3.00
13. Gravy only (*no meat*).....$ 1.50
14. Potato Salad.....$ 1.50

DESSERTS

1. Coconut Tarts.....$ 0.60
2. Cake (*slice*), Plain.....$1.25.....Milk...$ 1.50
3. Jam Rolls.....$ 1.00
4. Coconut Tarts.....$ 0.60
5. Sweet Potato Pudding.....$ 1.75
6. Bread Pudding.....$ 1.75
7. Casava Pudding.....$ 1.75
8. Creole Bun.....$ 2.25
9. Powder Bun.....$
10. Lemon Merengue Pie (*slice*).....$ 2.00

BEVERAGES

1. Coffee, Tea... (2nd Cup Free).....$ 0.65
2. Milo.....$ 1.00
3. Orange Juice.....$ 1.25
4. Sea Weed.....$ 3.00
5. Coke, Seven-Up, Sprite.....$ 0.65
6. Kola Champagne/Ginger Beer/Pineapple Soda....$ 1.30

NOTE: Prices indicated on this menu is subject to change without notice

Figure 8.3 Another approach to Belizean food for an American audience; the menu from Flower's Pot Restaurant in Chicago in 1998.
Source: collection of the author.

the environment, but in Chicago and Los Angeles it became something special. Food was one of the most important things that built the Belizean-American community, and it continues to help hold it together. No Belizean public or private celebration in the USA is complete without rice and beans, tamales and other familiar fare.

Everyday cooking in Belize did not really start to turn into "Belizean cuisine" until migrants who had lived for years in the USA began to return home in the

1980s. Belizean-Americans started to take holidays in Belize each year during the September Independence celebrations. Belizeans sometimes found it very irritating when long-time migrants returned, and then complained about how primitive, poor and boring they found the place. On the other hand, the one thing all migrants missed was the *taste* of home. When migrants asked for foods they remembered from their childhood, like crab soup or matilda foot, it sent a powerful message.[49]

During the late 1980s, some Belizean-Americans began to return home to live and open businesses. American pensions and social security go a lot farther in Belize, so it made a lot of financial and social sense, particularly in old age. In 1989 a family that had run a restaurant in Los Angeles came home and began to look around for a business opportunity, and eventually they opened an eatery in Belize City – the first one to be called a "Belizean restaurant."

Just ten years before, the idea of a Belizean restaurant would have been unthinkable, like calling an Ohio McDonald's an "American restaurant." The first time I heard a radio advertisement saying "Treat yourself to a Belizean Feast," it sounded strange, jarring and unfamiliar. My neighbor pointed out that the dishes they served were the same food you could get almost anywhere, and asked, "what makes them Belizean food all of a sudden?" But within months the idea of a Belizean restaurant became part of the normal background, and other restaurants also began to call attention to the Belizean food they had been serving for years. Within a year you could find stands and lunch counters advertising local "roots food," which is actually a term borrowed from Jamaican Rastafarians.[50]

After all those colonial years when Belizeans looked at anything coming from abroad as better than what they had at home, here was a supreme irony – now Belizean cuisine was being imported from American cities. Just like the brown sugar that had to travel to England for refining, Belizean cuisine was transformed into something much more respectable when the taste came back from abroad. But Belizeans were not the only ones importing ideas about local food.

The Peace Corps and Others

In 1984 I was one of only three employees of the United States Agency for International Development based in Belize. The following year the agency had a large office building and a small housing development to support more than twenty-five foreign staff. Add that to almost 200 Peace Corps volunteers and a large US Embassy staff, the people running a host of nongovernmental organizations and charities, foreign teachers, doctors, technicians, merchants, retirees and hippie farmers, and you had a sizeable expatriate community. For a time there were more Peace Corps volunteers per capita in Belize than in any country in the world, not to mention British VSOs (Voluntary Service Overseas, a British analog of The Peace Corps).

Many of these foreign sojourners formed their own little social circles, and had little interest in Belize. But others were curious and set out exploring, and a few jumped right in and got deeply involved in the local social scene where they had an influence far beyond their numbers.[51]

I found that there were always some who had a strong liberal sensitivity to local culture. By this I mean that like me, they were attracted to Belize because of its diversity and tolerance, and they grew to love the people and the place. And anyone who felt that way could not fail to see that many Belizeans did not value their own culture. Peace Corps volunteers often complained about the *lack* of local restaurants, music, handicrafts and other products. As the newspaper columnist "Smokey Joe" wrote in 1990:

> I wonder why it is that everyone who comes to this country can see the beauty, but we who live here can't. They see the same garbage that we lovingly put all over the place. They see the beauty that we refuse to see. They bless us; we curse ourselves. They praise us: we condemn ourselves. Is this a better land for them, and a plague to us? … Why is it that we as a people must depend on others to tell us what is good, or bad for us? … Why do we make ourselves inferior?[52]

One expatriate who decided to do something to change Belizean attitudes was Stewart Krohn, who migrated to Belize from Detroit in 1973. Married into a prominent Belizean family, he published Belize's first newsmagazine, *Brukdown*, between 1977 and 1982.[53] Besides news and politics, the magazine explored Belizean history, language and customs, promoted local artists and writers, and publicized new products. In 1977 the magazine featured a long article in praise of the national dish, submitting ten local restaurants to a comparative tasting of rice and beans (see Figure 8.4). One of the highest-rated of the restaurants was Mom's Triangle Café, ironically, run by a long-time American expatriate.

Other expatriates were instrumental in publishing the first Belizean cookbooks, and around the country they taught canning and food preservation, and promoted local products in numerous ways. The New Zealander, Charles Wright, was a tireless promoter of small-scale farming using local crops. All over the country VSO and Peace Corps volunteers promoted small-scale livestock production, crafts cooperatives and women's groups.

In a poor country, the kinds of salaries paid to expatriates gave them a great deal of buying power. In the years before mass tourism, some restaurants in Belize City depended on resident foreigners for business. Most of them served Chinese food, since the Chinese were the most experienced restaurateurs, and the rest served the generic continental dishes that had been the mainstay of Belizean hotels since the 1800s. Nobody really thought foreigners wanted to eat Belizean cooking; they might want to eat local fresh ingredients like lobster or grouper, but only cooked in a safely familiar way.

Figure 8.4 The cover of *Brukdown* magazine, for the April 1977 issue, which featured Belize's first restaurant reviews.
Source: collection of the author.

This gradually began to change in the early 1980s when the tourist industry slowly came to life and more adventurous expatriates arrived who began to look for something different. Several restaurants in Belize City hotels began to regularly serve Belizean dishes. I collected the menu in Figure 8.5, from the Villa

Figure 8.5 The "Belizean Dish of the Day" menu from the Villa Hotel, Belize City, 1984. At the time the Villa was one of the most expensive places to eat in town, catering mostly to tourists and local business people.
Source: collection of the author.

dining room in 1984 when it was the second most expensive hotel in the city. When I spoke to the owner about this menu, he said that he started out by asking the chef to make something cheap to feed his Belizean staff. Some customers asked waiters and staff about getting local food, and they sent to the kitchen for

leftovers from their own meal. Eventually he caught on and saw an opportunity. There is nothing particularly daring on this list, no pigtails, cowfoot soup or fried callaloo and eggs, but putting rice and beans, royal rat and conch soup on the menu of expensive hotels was a giant step in making Belizean cooking respectable.

To summarize: we have one version of Belizean food developed in America by Belizeans for Belizean-Americans, which was eventually brought back to Belize. Another version was developed in Belize, with strong influence by Americans and other foreigners, intended for Belizeans, but mostly eaten by American expatriates and tourists. Today there is yet a *third* version of Belizean food that threatens to upstage the others; that cooked up by Belizean and foreign entrepreneurs to feed tourists something "authentic" and exotic.

Feeding the Tourists

Tourism was not part of England's strategy for economic development in Belize, which depended instead on mahogany, sugar and citrus. Upon self-government in the 1960s, the ruling People's United Party (PUP) followed the lead of many liberal and left-leaning governments and took a skeptical approach to tourism, doubting if it could ever provide real and dependable economic growth.[54] The official government position was that unless it was strictly controlled, tourism would enrich foreign businesses and leave most Belizeans behind in poorly paid service jobs. George Price, as Prime Minister, gave speeches in which he said he did not want Belize to follow the lead of other Caribbean islands, becoming a "nation of waiters and busboys."

Nevertheless, tourism grew slowly and steadily, mostly confined to the offshore fishing settlements on Caye Caulker and Ambergris Cay that catered to divers and high-end beach tourists. Most establishments were small, and given high prices and labor costs and poor air connections, there was no way Belize could compete for the mass tourism business that was burgeoning nearby on the east coast of Yucatan around Cancun. Between 30,000 and 40,000 tourists a year were visiting in the early 1980s, when there were only about 1,300 hotel rooms in the whole country.[55]

Government policy did an about-face when Price's PUP government was thrown out of office in the 1984 elections by the more conservative and "free-market" oriented United Democratic Party (UDP). This government encouraged foreign companies, started negotiations for a casino, built free-trade zones, a new airport and marina projects, and gave out loans, tax concessions, work permits and duty exemptions to help tourism get started. The red carpet was rolled out for journalists, travel writers, groups of travel agents and others in the tourist promotion business.

The tourist industry itself was just beginning to move away from mass tourism into promoting archeology, nature and exotic culture as attractions, building the

"Ruta Maya" connecting Yucatan, Belize, Guatemala and Honduras. As the idea of smaller-scale "ecotourism" became popular, small lodges, spas, adventure destinations, private parks, rainforest trails and a zoo sprang up around the country. Foreign conservation organizations acquired and fenced large chunks of the country, and seeing the way the wind was blowing, the Belize government built a network of national parks and reef, manatee, bird, butterfly, iguana and jaguar preserves. Development agencies pumped millions of dollars into new roads, excavating and preserving Mayan ruins, and training hordes of guides, hotel managers, tour operators, restaurant managers and chefs.

All these efforts paid off, proving that in tourism, "if you build it, they will come." That is, if you make the right appeal at the right time, and you don't have political problems, disease outbreaks or natural disasters that drive the tourists away. Tourist arrivals hit 100,000 in 1987, and have run around 200,000 a year since 2000, with a count of over 5,000 hotel rooms in 2003. More than other countries in the region, Belize has managed to keep the tourist industry at a small enough scale that local people can participate, instead of being bought and driven out by well-financed foreigners. There *are* a huge number of jobs as waitresses, maids and busboys, but there are also a lot of guides, dive masters, hotel managers and travel agents.

There are big changes on the horizon though. In 2002 the Florida-based cruise industry added Belize City as a stop on many of their one-week Caribbean cruises. The number of cruiseship tourists, negligible in the early 1990s, grew to almost 75,000 *per month* in 2003, exceeding 850,000 for the year of 2004, probably exceeding a million in 2005.[56] Since then the country has been scrambling to build tourist villages, attractions, museums and to set up day excursions for an almost unbelievable number of short-term visitors who spend no more than a few hours ashore (most of whom bring their own lunch from the ship).

The tourist industry today is very heterogeneous, catering to everyone from adventure travelers who want to hike through Indian villages and stay in thatch huts, to high-end resorts offering celebrities a private island house with servants, a secluded beach and their own hot tub and masseur. Tourists can climb through the rainforest canopy, tube through caves full of ancient Mayan pottery and float along a reef through crystal clear ocean with schools of rays and sharks. By and large they find open and hospitable people who are genuinely happy to have visitors, but the sudden growth of the industry makes it hard for Belize to offer the level of tourist experience provided by other, richer countries that have had longer to develop attractions.

Through most of the 1980s and 1990s, for example, there were few arts and crafts for people to buy, and instead all the "Belizean" masks, ashtrays, mugs, caps and shirts were imported from Mexico and other Central American countries, or they were bulk ordered from factories in China (complete with the Belizean flag!).

It has taken time for Belizeans to learn what tourists want to buy, and to start painting, carving and weaving appropriate things. The Belizean approach to tourism is still far too casual for some supercharged visitors who want everything to be perfect and on time.

This lag in professionalism affected tourist food, as shown by the quotes at the beginning of this chapter. Restaurant dining has not been one of Belize's tourist attractions. In the early years, guidebooks told tourists to eat in Chinese restaurants, where they would find familiar fare, and warned them away from street food, market stalls and other places where local people ate. Some tourists assumed that local food and water was "dirty" and dangerous, even though local standards of hygiene and sanitation are high.

Belizean cuisine was hard to find because, before the advent of large-scale tourism, most was hidden beneath the surface like the proverbial iceberg, with only a tiny part in plain sight. The rest was kept in the kitchen, made from recipes handed down through generations, concocted from ingredients that never appeared in an open market. In rural Belize people still grew their own fruits and vegetables. The cities had never really developed a restaurant culture; away from home Belizeans usually bought from street vendors or found a relative or friend. Working men and women brought food from home, or had food delivered to the office. A family going out for a celebration often ate fried chicken or fish at a Chinese place, and at public festivities like horse races or cricket matches they could buy barbecue chicken and rice and beans from stalls. Lunch places in the cities and towns might serve rice and beans or bowls of escabeche, and bakeries or pastry shops always had an assortment of cakes, pies and tarts. At a bar or rum shop you could usually get a snack of spicy conch ceviche or crispy conch fritters.

This is why so many tourists in the 1980s and early 1990s could only find "tiny piles of withered produce," and the odd plate of rice and beans. The infrastructure was just not there to provide the local food and cuisine that a tourist industry requires.

The New Wave of Creole Cooking

In the early years of the tourist industry the tourists who ended up in San Pedro on Ambergris Caye (still Belize's largest tourist destination) knew nothing about Belize – they were there to fish and dive or lie on the beach. Most cooks were islanders, Hispanics comfortable with Mexican/Yucatecan food rather than foods of the mainland. The restaurants experimented gingerly with serving Belizean recipes. Early 1980s beachfront restaurants served an American-style menu heavy on fried seafood, a few Mexican dishes and plenty of elaborate rum drinks. Adventurous tourists might find their way to the Chinese restaurants on the street behind the beach, but few made it further to the tiny kitchens cooking for Belizean

workers. If Belizean food made it onto the hotel restaurant menus, it was a side dish of rice and beans, or a conch ceviche appetizer. You could find a much wider range of Belizean food at Tickie's or Flower's Pot in Chicago than you could in the restaurants on the island.

The islands had fish and coconuts, but everything else had to be imported. Geographically, it was easier and cheaper to buy fruit and vegetables and meat directly across the bay in the thriving Mexican city of Chetumal than in Belize City. The shops on the island were full of imported canned and packaged goods from Mexico and the USA that came through wholesalers in Belize and Mexico. A restaurant owner found it easier to buy a dozen cases of pasta, cheese and canned tomatoes from a wholesale importer, than to find reliable local suppliers for fresh ingredients. Tourists were more likely to eat frozen mixed vegetables from the USA, or boiled Mexican carrots, than something grown in Belize. Even when mainland Belizean farmers responded by growing the kinds of things tourists might like to eat, they had a hard time getting their food into island markets.

As island tourism grew, niches opened up for places making pizza, hamburgers and other fast food, for ice-cream parlors and coffee shops and an assortment of Thai, Mexican and Italian restaurants that were mostly owned and managed by the American and European expatriates who were moving to the island in greater numbers. The last time I went to San Pedro there was a new Spanish restaurant, a sausage factory and delicatessen run by a nice retired couple from Wisconsin and a French bakery churning out baguettes and patisserie.

The only thing missing from this cosmopolitan mix was anything beyond rice and beans that looked like what I knew as Belizean food. For that you still have to go to the back streets, now overflowing with Belizeans from the mainland and migrants from neighboring countries, attracted by jobs in construction and the service economy. If you knew where to look, you could find a bowl of conch soup, though the demand from big hotels drove the price of conch meat up beyond the reach of most Belizeans.[57]

Fortunately San Pedro is not a model for the rest of the country, where tourism has helped start a revival of Belizean cuisines. One of the most important indirect ways that tourism has changed Belizean dining is that it has brought new sources of income to people around the country. Instead of being concentrated in Belize City offices, the new jobs are scattered, bringing new income even to tiny villages. This means that new groups of rural and urban people now have money to go out. And with more dual-income couples and fewer women staying home in the kitchen, they also have less chance to cook at home.

The result has been an explosion in street food, as streams of vendors sell everything from hot meat pies (a favorite morning snack) to tacos, fresh fruit, panades and hot dogs. Hungry Belizeans can now find well-prepared specialties like cowfoot soup, boil up and black relleno in more markets around the country

Figure 8.6 Markets in Belize serve a variety of Creole and Spanish dishes to busy working people at midday. This is the Belmopan municipal market in July 2004.
Source: photo by author.

(Figure 8.6). On the weekends, streets are lined with stalls and barbecues. In the 1980s I could drive for hours, finding nothing to eat by the roadside except little shops with crackers, warm coke and canned goods. Now you can buy good food, and find local snacks like plantain chips and cashew nuts, even in gas stations (alongside ubiquitous Pringles and spray cans of nacho cheese). Fresh Belizean fruit juices now crowd the soft drinks in store refrigerators.

At the same time the influx of immigrants has revitalized the rural economy, making all kinds of produce more widely available. The rising volume of demand for local meat and vegetables has lowered prices, so Belizean beef and pork is now finally cheaper than Danish canned lunchmeat or Brazilian corned beef. The Mennonite colonies have been churning out cheap chicken, beans and other staples for many years, but now they are joined by Salvadoran, Mexican, Guatemalan and Honduran small farmers who bring a steady supply of fruits and vegetables to market stalls around the country.

Because of the demand of tourist restaurants, middlemen drive trucks out into the countryside to buy produce, which they deliver to markets and chefs. On a recent

visit I found huge guavas, snow peas, luscious red *pitahayas* and fresh grapes sold by immigrant Taiwanese who worked with local farmers.[58] Food that used to be available only seasonally or as expensive imports is now found year-round. Seasonal festivals in different parts of the country that have a food theme are also becoming popular. Crooked Tree has had a Cashew Festival for some time, and now Placencia has "Lobsterfest," and in 2004 Cayo held a Mango Festival complete with cooking and salsa contests, and displays of local mango jams and other products.

More Belizeans are working in the restaurant trade and getting experience as professional chefs, aided by training programs at local colleges and through the tourist industry association. There is even a cooking show on local television, and a restaurant reviewer in one of the newspapers. As they learn more about the kind of food that tourists want to eat, some chefs are trying to blend and adapt local dishes for foreign tastes, drawing on the different cultures of Belize for inspiration. While it is still hard to find a restaurant that regularly serves Garifuna cooking, the rest of the local and ethnic cuisines are thriving, instead of disappearing. People are beginning to understand that cultural diversity *attracts* tourists, and provides a raw material to sell in the global marketplace that is more valuable than cocoa or bananas.

East Indian food, which almost disappeared in the 1980s, has been revived by new immigrants from the subcontinent, but also by older immigrants who have found a wider demand for their food. In Punta Gorda, still the most culturally diverse town in the country, one restaurant serves only the Belizean-style East Indian cooking, dishes like palm heart tacari, and fish with breadfruit in coconut milk. I even met a Mopan Maya family running a small ecotourism lodge who are adapting Mayan dishes to their clients, creating new recipes with a mix of non-traditional ingredients, local herbs and very old cooking techniques (Figure 8.7). While urban Belizeans once shunned local and rural foods, now anything that seems authentic, "rootsy" and even "bushy" is fashionable and popular, invoking pride and national feeling instead of shame and embarrassment.

The growing number of hotels, lodges and restaurants around the country has created tough competition, some of it from expatriates who have experience in catering to tourists. The rising level of professionalism and sophistication is reflected in restaurants all around the country. Good table service is becoming commonplace, along with accurate menus and freshly prepared dishes.[59] Savvy Belizean restaurateurs have learned that foreigners like a main dish to include choices of starches and salad dressings, plus an attractive presentation, and that they need to serve vegetarian dishes.[60] The standard of kitchens and dining rooms is rising as successful restaurant owners put some of their profits back into their businesses.

The explosion of the tourist business has also promoted local food processing and packaging, and some of this is beginning to incubate new export products. The

Figure 8.7 The Chun family poses in the small dining room of their ecotourism lodge, Tutzil Ha, at the entrance to the Cockscomb Basin Jaguar Preserve.
Source: photo by author.

biggest problem for people trying to process and prepare foods for the local market has always been the steep learning curve and heavy capital needed to make the jump from producing small batches for an informal local market, to international professional standards. If you want to sell food on the international market, anything from candy to jams and dried fruit, you have to meet rigorous health and packaging requirements that are expensive and technically challenging, especially in a small and poor country.

Tourists take home local jams, chutneys and jellies, fruit wines, rum, packaged candies and snacks, dried fruits and nuts, spices, coffee and all kinds of sauces, which they have often tasted in restaurants. This market is enough to boost some small producers up the learning curve and give them experience with higher-quality processing and packaging. The number of Belizean food products on local shelves is rising, their quality is getting better and they are more attractively packaged. New enterprises are consistently given financial incentives by the government, and as the market expands even more, new local products will continue to

appear. Hopefully, some will find a place in North American and European gourmet and specialty stores. Belizean fresh spices and herbs are already of extraordinarily high quality, and sooner or later someone will discover that a box of cottobrute could be a "sinfully delicious" treat for global gourmets.

All this activity has pushed food forward in the national consciousness. Cookbooks can be found in almost every bookshop, and cooking is being recognized as a profession. The annual "Taste of Belize" event sponsored by the Belize Tourism Board has given national press and prominence to a number of local chefs, who gain international visibility when the winners head off to the annual "Taste of the Caribbean" competition.[61]

But what kind of food is being promoted by these celebrity chefs and the courses and workshops they teach? Most of the contestants are drawn from the larger and more expensive restaurants and hotels. The winner in 2004 was Patrick Rodriguez from the exclusive Smoky Mermaid in Belize City, who won with *Blackened Tilapia with Beer Battered Shrimp and Pineapple Salsa*, a completely stateless dish that could truly be from anywhere in the tourist world. "Bartender of the Year" went to Chaa Creek Lodge's Mariano Coc for something called a *Comfortable Slippery Banana*. A vegetarian menu including *Corn Flakes Loaf*, *Gluten Steak with Tomato Sauce* and *Cabbage Peanut Butter Rice* won the amateur division. It is hard to see what any of this has to do with Belizean cuisine, or any local spices or ingredients.

A Worm in the Apple?

Generic "tropical" tourist cuisine is the less appetizing side of the tourist boom in Belize, a kind of cooking evident in a recent professionally produced DVD called *Taste Belize!*[62] The film is really a promotion for resorts, and the cooking is a backdrop to the attractions of the beaches, jungles, spas, and the mystical experiences of Mayan healing. It comes complete with thirty recipes and some local music clips. Of the ten chefs from featured resorts, only three are Belizean – the rest are German, American, Australian, Austrian and Dutch, including graduates of the famous Culinary Institute of America, and Johnson and Wales cooking schools.

The only thing I could find in the film that could qualify as Belizean was the coconut meringue pie cooked by Belizean Anna McNab at the Maya Mountain Lodge – the least expensive of the places featured, and the only one where Belizeans appear on camera as anything but servants (actually eating in the restaurant!).[63] The rest of the chefs are trying to dance between global standards and local flavor, but the results have little of Belize in them, except some of the ingredients. Sean Beaton from Boston, the chef at the Bistro at Portofino resort, is typical. His recipe for a deep-fried banana is generically tropical. The banana at

least is from Belize, but the coating of coconut flakes appears to be the kind imported in a bag from the USA (probably grown in the Philippines). The dessert is flambéed with Grand Marnier and imported butter, garnished with local mango and orange, and plated in the minimalist style of French nouvelle cuisine with the obligatory artistic drizzle of sauce.

Perhaps most pretentious is the performance by Larry Nicola, a Los Angeleno who says he is "pioneering the New Belizean Cuisine" at Luba Hati resort on the Placencia peninsula. "All of our dishes are the same inspiration. Very clean, very healthy, and … we're taking the Belize cuisine that they have here and taking all the fresh ingredients they have here and making some things that we really enjoy, and our guests will really enjoy," says Nicola. The result is … *Seared Ahi Tuna with a Tamarind Grapefruit Sauce on Pickled Ginger*. The tuna (a very uncommon fish in Belize) is crusted with imported black pepper, balanced on top of the ginger in the center of a big plate with a puddle of sauce. The only Belizean thing about this dish, besides some ingredients, are three tiny callaloo leaves ornamenting the outside edge of the plate. Served with a cold cantaloupe soup, here is a meal you could eat at a hundred restaurants in Hawaii. Belize is just a garnish, a setting, a stage for the performance. In this aggressive style of culinary globalization, the country has been swallowed whole and completely anonymized.

The generic international style is reflected in new expensive restaurants in the main tourist centers that serve the heavyweight global cuisines – Italian, Mexican, Cajun, Tandoori, Lebanese and even French – and various exotic fantasy mixtures. Francis Ford Coppola's resort at Placencia, the Turtle Inn, has a Balinese theme – the waiters have somehow been persuaded to wear sarongs – but most of the menu is Italian.

There is no way Belize can produce the variety of specialty raw and processed foods that are required by high-end international cuisine. Some of the restaurants grow their own gardens, but most just import ingredients. The fishing cooperatives, which once exported Belize's lobster, conch and fresh fish, now make money *importing* frozen scallops, octopus, salmon and halibut, and even temperate freshwater fish like trout. Kingfish and grouper, mostly fished out of Belizean waters, are imported from Guyana, where the stocks have not yet been destroyed. Unsatisfied with Belize's fine organic range-fed beef, one restaurant advertises Angus burgers straight from the USA.

Local farmers cannot keep up with the unending variety of ingredients demanded by exotic cookery, everything from kohlrabi to silken tofu. High-priced and rare foods move up the global food chain away from poor consumers and toward rich ones. The paradox this creates in Belize is illustrated by a look in the freezer cabinet of a Belizean village store (Figure 8.8), where the large variety of local meat products are patriotically labeled "Buy Belizean," but they have to compete with a prepackaged frozen rice bowl meal.

Figure 8.8 A look into a freezer in a small grocery store in Punta Gorda, where local meat products compete with imported prepackaged convenience food (2004).
Source: photo by author.

As Belizeans themselves become more cosmopolitan diners, they also start to demand more variety that can never be produced at home, including all the complex diet foods and prepared frozen convenience dishes that the US food industry produces in such profusion. While the increasing health consciousness of Belizeans at the table has led many to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables and make salads a regular part of their meals, it has led more to shun traditional starchy staples and coconut oil. Packaged diet foods and frozen meals are becoming common, laden as they are with all the power of North American science and the packaged message that slimness is sexy.

It is hard to be outraged at the growing variety of cuisine available in Belize. What is wrong with finding decent pizza or tasty burgers, especially from locally owned and managed chains like Pepper's Pizza and HL Burgers? Why shouldn't Belizeans be able to try Mexican or Italian food, or taste sushi if they want? Abundant choice only becomes a problem if international food crowds out or submerges local food, and if we end up back with the colonial culinary apartheid where the rich eat foreign food, and the poor are stuck with something considered inferior just because it is denigrated by the rich. The high-profit Italian restaurants that charge US$50 a plate for pasta can skim off most of the tourism revenue for foreign owners and chefs, while Belizean restaurants are still squeezing tiny margins to stay in business. Belizean food could become second-class dining in its own country. As one Belizean perceptively wrote:

> Belizean cuisine could be taken to a much higher level, easily, if only marketed properly or given the polish that so many other countries have given theirs. Some of the food/cuisine coming out of people's home kitchens or shacks on a Saturday morning are simply marvelous. Sad to say, I don't think that anyone will capitalize on that in the future, which in some ways makes me smile, cause then, only locals know where to find this beautiful taste.[64]

So why hasn't Belizean food gone to that higher level? Why aren't there high-end Belizean restaurants figuring out ways to use unique local ingredients and combinations to please sophisticated foreign palates? First, most professional chefs in the country are foreigners, or have been trained by foreigners who themselves know nothing about the richness of Belizean foodways.[65] Too many foreign resort and restaurant owners know little about local food beyond rice and beans, and they do not want to learn. Others just assume that tourists always want something familiar and safe.

Belizeans are going to have to take the initiative, but the idea of keeping the "real" food as a private treasure for Belizeans can be an obstacle. As tourism has invaded more of the country, some Belizeans draw back, protecting their own cultural territory. When I first went to Belize, people were very open to outsiders, willing to teach a visitor how to speak Kriol, to invite people into their homes and share their culture. After dealing with thirty years of anthropologists, journalists, missionaries and thousands of other inquisitive foreigners, it is understandable that many Belizeans would become defensive. Sometimes I am surprised that Belizeans continue to be so tolerant and hospitable, given all they have been through, especially now that so much of the country has been bought up by foreigners who live at a level of luxury most Belizeans can only dream about. There is no reason, though, why these boundaries have to stop the creolizing process that made Belizean cuisine in the first place, or prevent Belizeans from presenting their culinary culture to tourists.

Culinary tourism is one of the most rapidly growing parts of the industry. A small but growing number of lodges, restaurants and small hotels around the country, mostly those owned by Belizeans, do serve real home cooking to tourists and locals alike. These are often cheaper places that cannot afford advertising, elaborate menus, fancy table settings and air conditioning, and they lack the capacity to handle large tour groups. They are usually family operated, and because local people run them, the chefs can use personal connections to ensure a steady supply of fresh ingredients from gardens and small farms. This is where you are most likely to find seasonal specialties, game meat, handmade tortillas, rich desserts and fresh juices instead of soft drinks. A place like Clarissa Falls restaurant in rural Cayo district, for example, serves local Hispanic favorites like escabeche and relleno negro, but chef Chena Galvez has learned enough about the taste of tourists to include vegetarian dishes, green salads and pastas.[66] Still, many tourists would hesitate to step into an informal setting like the place offering cowfoot soup in Figure 8.9, even though they are likely to find a culinary treat and a warm welcome.

Will cooks like Chena Galvez go on to bring Belize into the ranks of international cuisines, so some time in the future tourists would *go to* Belize for its renowned dining, as well as its beaches and jungles? If it happens, judging from the past, it will involve some impetus from *outside* Belize, probably a Belizean who has lived abroad for many years and worked in the restaurant trade, or an expatriate who has lived in Belize long enough to really learn the culture. Even if it never happens, as long as Belize is part of the global village, we can be sure its people will continue to yearn for the tastes and aromas that still mean *home*, and the vital protean essence of Belizean cuisine will never disappear.

One very optimistic sign is the 2003 publication in Belize of a new kind of cookbook called *Mmm … A Taste of Belizean Cooking*. As Hector Martinez, the marketing director for the publisher explained:

> The concept actually came up in the first culinary gala in 2001 … At the gala we learned that a lot of chefs are using these traditional dishes and just adding more stuff, being a bit more creative. And we figured having a cookbook like this would show that there are creative ways of doing stuff, especially with the influence of different cultures that have come into Belize. The whole thing is promoting creativity. Moving from rice and beans and adding that little extra touch, moving from tamales and dukunu and just adding a little bit of spice to it. Chefs out there will feel much more comforted to say go ahead and do stuff like that. We have a lot of different vegetables that we are growing now in Belize that we never had before and now having all these recipes will influence people to be a little bit more creative with what we have around us.[67]

Figure 8.9 A cozy roadside restaurant on the Western Highway close to the town of Santa Elena advertises the special of the day (2004).
Source: photo by author.

Recipe: Chilled Cantaloupe Soup, with Cayo Cuban Sandwich[68]

Soup

½ large ripe mango
1 ripe cantaloupe
1 cup (235 ml) fresh squeezed orange juice
½ cup (120 ml) lime juice
8 mint leaves
½ cup (120 ml) plain or vanilla yogurt

Puree mango and cantaloupe in blender with orange and lime juice. Chill the mixture and ladle into chilled bowl, add spoonful of yogurt and garnish with mint leaves.

Cayo Cuban Sandwich

12 slices of white bread
12 slices each of tomato and cucumber

Relish:
1 small jar pimentos
½ red bell pepper, diced
1 teaspoon (5 ml) sweet pickle relish
2 hard-boiled eggs
4 oz (115 g) cream cheese
½ cup (120 ml) mayonnaise
Salt and pepper to taste

6 medium chicken breasts, lightly salted and grilled

Use a round cutter on 12 slices of white bread to make rounds. Toast the bread.

Mix together the relish ingredients and spread a layer on each round of bread, adding thin slices of tomato and cucumber.

Put half a grilled chicken breast on top of each stack and top with a spoonful of relish.

–9–

Fast Food or Home Cooking?

> I think it is an uphill battle, but we have to persist, we have to continue and certainly the media can play a big part with this. But what we have to understand is we are dealing with a very sophisticated penetration here of our culture in marketing. Whether it be from the multinationals who want to sell their produce to us. I mean our people get cable television which means they are bombarded with advertisements promoting unhealthy foods, or certainly imported foods. Now we have to fight against that and obviously it's a very unequal struggle going on here.
>
> Prime Minister Said Musa

> We need to change our attitudes. We need to learn to appreciate the very native and cultural foods that we have. And there are so many examples that, they are very nutritious, that really we don't need to import a lot of these canned stuff. We can produce and consume a lot of what we eat.[1]
>
> Chief Agriculture Officer Eugene Waight

A World of Fast Food Nations?

It is easy to conjure up nightmare visions of the future of the global diet. Upton Sinclair's description of the Chicago meat-packing industry, published in *The Jungle* in 1906, still resonates today as a portrait of capitalism run amuck in the food market. Sinclair saw huge companies controlling a dehumanized workplace that reduced food production to a vast assembly line, churning out contaminated and unhealthy products to consumers who had no choices. How much has really changed in the chicken-processing factories which dot the southern US today, or in the huge intensive swine factory farms that confine thousands of animals in tiny pens? One has to wonder what Sinclair would have thought of the terrible working conditions in today's fast-food industry, genetically modified corn and the rapid disappearance of the venerable American family farm.

We have even more to worry about than the social critics of Sinclair's era. We know that modern food production is hard on the natural environment – we can see the fish stocks disappearing, watch the vast "dead zone" of lifeless anoxic water growing in the Gulf of Mexico each summer, read warnings about mercury and pesticide residues and contemplate the oceans of fossil fuels burned up to carry

huge amounts of food across continents. As mega-corporations control a growing share of the food market, they can bend governments to their will, changing or circumventing labor laws and environmental controls, squeezing farmers and producers into ever-more destructive and dangerous practices, and resisting reforms that cut into profits. Gourmets can worry about the rising tide that threatens to bury local variety and culinary traditions under the parking lots of millions of burger and fried chicken joints, or the mediocrity of chains like Applebee's, Little Chef and Buffalo Grill with their standardized menus.[2] For a real nightmare, extend this vision to a global scale – imagine billions of Asian farmers displaced by agribusiness, all the world's cuisines flattened and homogenized.

This vision of a future "food Armageddon" connects and ramifies with the kinds of theories of empire and globalization current among many academic disciplines, which depict a postmodern, post-Fordist world of displaced migrant workers in temporary jobs, and unrooted cosmopolitan consumers moving from one shallow experience to another. Space and place lose their meaning under what David Harvey calls time-space compression, and culture is described with terms like *flux*, *uncertainty*, *ephemerality*, and *fragmentation*.[3] In the background lurks a centralized and controlling culture industry that promotes a Disneyesque experience economy, driving an endless and fruitless quest for satisfaction through buying and accumulating more and more meaningless commodities.

Environmental, political and social concerns about food can lead us into other dichotomies when we think about the problems of the modern global food system. Nabhan, Berry, Schlosser and others say that industrial food controlled by large corporations is the problem.[4] In their vision the polarity is something like big food and small food, or corporate food and gardens. One side is fair to workers and does no harm to the environment, while on the other side you have ruthless vertically integrated mega-corporations that want to turn food into another industrial product, farms into factories, nature into raw material and consumers into compliant automatons who will eat whatever is convenient and cheap, even though it is packed with calories, fat, salt and chemical preservatives.[5] There is no question that in many places agricultural and food industries have indeed turned food into just another consumer good, showing no concern for the long-term health of workers, consumers or the planet. That is what consumer capitalism does best – it makes standardized goods widely available, to maximize the bottom line of short-term profit.

But the alternative is less clear. Ideas about fairer trade and higher environmental standards, more accurate labeling, more public knowledge, a better understanding of health and more informed and enlightened government regulation to protect workers, producers and consumers are all important steps, but to many they seem like nibbles around the edges of the problem. "Conscious buying" to support local and humane production is surely important, but will it challenge Burger King?[6]

The movement for bioregionalism and relocalization expounded by authors like Berry and Nabhan requires a radical transformation of the world economy and really the end of corporate capitalism as we know it, as every household, town and province becomes more self-sufficient. This world looks suspiciously like a college town where middle-class consumers shop at the local farmers' market. And who is going to feed the workers at the factory that makes the cars they need to drive their vine-wrapped goat cheese to market every Sunday?[7] More to the point, getting to this world is going to require a revolution, and I suspect it would take violence to pull many people away from their favorite fast foods.

It is hard to imagine how we could create an entire planet of educated gourmets, dedicated to eating local, seasonal, organic produce. Nor does it seem practical to envision a planet crowded with 8 billion people supported by self-sufficient family farms. It is important to remember that more than 1.2 billion people on the planet would be delighted to have a source of clean drinking water, a fact that puts the search for the tastiest balsamic vinegar in a different perspective.

The emphasis of the *slow food* movement on gourmet food tends to ignore the more prosaic dishes that people have to afford every day, which fit into busy lives, mobile families and high-tech kitchens. Most people just cannot afford the time and effort to track down politically correct ingredients. Even if they have the time, it is difficult to find out where your food's ingredients come from without plenty of time and a research grant. It is nice to think of a world where everyone spends their weekend gardening and preparing huge meals for friends and family, but we need to recognize the element of nostalgia in this vision. In Jeffrey Pilcher's trenchant words, "slow food offers little to single parents working overtime to support a family in the collapsing ruins of the U.S. welfare state."[8]

We should also recognize that a lot of very traditional and ecologically sound foods are actually fast food – snacks prepared quickly in markets or by street vendors to take home or eat while walking, or riding a bus.[9] City people have been busy and pressed for time since the first cities of ancient Mesopotamia. Nevertheless, the idea of slow food makes important points. Too often in capitalist societies, money and the market squeeze out all other values. Modern markets always tend to favor common standards – measures of quantity and price that are easily counted and measured – instead of the more difficult to measure qualities of things, especially the subtle ones – nuances that are so easily lost when all people can see is the bottom line.[10] And food is all about quality and fine distinctions, things that are incredibly valuable, even if the elements of a Michelin star are subjective and impossible to pin down and measure with a meter or a formula.

Slow food and organic activists as well as food writers and gourmets often draw a contrast between "authentic" historical or local food and the oppressive sameness of industrial diets. But if we look more closely at the way people use the terms, saying that one kind of food is authentic or traditional, and another is

artificial or fake, really makes very little sense – all food is creative in some way, and grounded in the past in other ways. How old does a recipe have to be in order to be traditional? What should we think when an old industrial food like salted (corned) beef or pickled herring becomes part of "traditional" ethnic cuisine? Are we saying the only good food is that prepared as a slavish copy, a mechanical reproduction of something made in the past? That would be futile, since the past can never be completely replicated – as is evident to anyone who has watched Civil War reenactors.

So who is to judge what is more authentic? Even historians and specialists with an intimate knowledge of the past cannot agree on what things looked, smelled and tasted like hundreds of years ago. Edward Bruner argues convincingly that people actually mean several very different things when they talk about authenticity.[11] Extending his ideas to food, you can have authentic ingredients, authentic recipes or authentic utensils, and you can dress in period clothes while you cook or serve the food on replicas of the correct dishes, or just try to capture some authentic "flavor" of the past – and these do not have to coincide. The inevitable result of any search for authenticity is that you always end up with something completely modern in intent, since the purpose of the performance lies in the present, not the past. Let us also not forget that slavery, food adulteration and starvation are just as "traditional" as hearth-baked bread and home-brewed wine. Only some traditions are worth selecting for reproduction, reinvention and remembrance.

If industrial food is so awful, so terrible for people's souls and the planet, why is it so popular? As Sidney Mintz has recently pointed out, we did not get the modern food system of the rich world by accident, or simply through the malign visions of greedy capitalists, but because it satisfies real demands and perceived needs.[12] Hundreds of millions have fled a farming life because it is hard, dirty and poorly paid work. Processed and packaged foods and modern kitchen equipment have freed millions for education, work and activities they find more rewarding than the tedious hard work of grinding grain and baking bread every day. There are very good reasons why people like having many choices of food, and while eating local food is unquestionably good for the environment, do we really want to deny wheat bread to Nigerians and bananas to Icelanders, or only eat fruit when it is ripe in our neighborhood?

A viable alternative to industrial food has to take these very real successes of the modern food system into account. We also have to consider the possibility that many changes in technology and the world economy cannot simply be reversed, or returned to a prior state. Once they have accepted frozen convenience foods and microwaves into their lives, most are not about to give them up willingly, though they may be prepared to use them less often. The hundreds of millions of people who eat a vegetarian grain-based diet because they cannot afford meat, while they see an abundance of exotic food in shops and on television every day, are not likely

to stick to their old diet when their wages rise. It seems like hypocrisy for rich meat eaters to tell them they are better off eating millet porridge and greens for every meal.

The global food system will continue to change, and it may move away from what we now call convenience foods, but that direction is not likely to resemble anything we have seen before. Visions of the past cannot serve as a guide for the possible directions the future of food can take. This need for a different vision has to move us away from the simple dichotomies of fast or slow food, industrial or hand-crafted, mass market or niche market. Remembering the billions who still need basic food security, Mintz reframes the problem in this way:

> If we cannot really change fast food; and if we cannot bring slow food to more than a modest fraction of the people of the world; then should we not aim at good food, and healthy food, for everybody? That is what I mean by foods at moderate speeds …[13]

In making this point, Mintz invites us to think outside the narrow world of the rich countries, and consider a future where the rest of the world – the majority – are going in their own direction, rather than simply following in the historical footsteps of the countries that call themselves *developed*. And this brings us again to the theme of globalization that runs through all the chapters in this book.

Variety on the Menu in the Global Village

Apocalyptic predictions and simple dichotomies dominate ideas about globalization, just as they do when people think about the future of food. Old and stale ideas have a tendency to resurface in new guises in the debates about globalization, using new verbal clothes to cover the nakedness of the same liberal or conservative positions about the globe that dominated the cold war, and even the colonial era.[14] In this book I have made a case that globalization is a long-standing and continuous process, and that localization and globalization are really part of the same phenomenon, despite the fact that they often look like opposed principles. On the other hand, the dual processes of globalization and localization are not static or cyclic; instead the balance and interaction between local and global is constantly changing. In each chapter I have tracked some of the technological, economic and political changes that make each period of globalization different from what came before.

Another reason why globalization is always changing is that people's *understandings* of global processes are constantly changing, and this affects the way they act. In each period there are prevailing metaphors and key concepts through which people visualize, interpret and challenge the interactions between global and local. In the Caribbean an era when people thought about *conquest* and

pillage, was followed by a time organized by the concept of *colonization* and *race*, and then a period dominated by the powerful notion of *empire*. If the late twentieth century was a time when the key concept was the *nation*, the most important way that people envision and debate the current period of globalization is with the idea of *culture*.[15]

The awareness of culture now pervades every aspect of life in Belize, becoming an essential part of the way Belizeans understand their relationships with each other, and between Belize and the rest of the world. What was once largely unconscious – the everyday experience that people just thought of as normal life and common sense – is now a matter of public debate and self-consciousness. Balinese temple rituals, once an unremarkable part of everyday life, are now seen as something culturally characteristic that sets Balinese apart from other people. They are part of a consciousness of difference, of contrast with other groups of people who see the world in different ways and believe different things. In Belize people never really thought much about their daily food. It was just what people ate. They were certainly aware that Mayan people ate different things from Creoles and Mennonites, just as different people wear different clothes and have different skin colors. But today these daily foods are consciously produced and consumed as *Belizean food* and *roots food* and *Mayan food*; they have become emblems, symbols and metaphors where once they may have been simply substances that were ingested.[16]

In this way the local, when not replaced by new imports from abroad, still becomes in an important sense globalized. The entire world's immense cultural varieties become equivalent to each other; they become local customs, local religions, local dances that are uniform in their form if not their content. Here they eat tamales, there rice and beans. Here they are Catholics, there Moslems. The world becomes a pageant of diversity with its differences neatly organized and selected. Tourism requires a crude performance of this diversity; around the world there are political movements, indigenous musical ensembles, state offices of culture, poet laureates and university departments devoted to rendering aspects of local practices into a public, standardized format that makes them equivalent to others (often with the goal of proving their respectability, value or even superiority). They raise monuments, record folklore, preserve buildings, put artifacts in museums and write cookbooks, following paths already well worn by generations of historians, anthropologists and folklorists.

My point is that when it comes to local cuisines, the new world order is not like the one of the nineteenth century. For the British and Americans during the age of imperialism, economic and cultural control went hand in hand. When you took control of a new territory, you remade it, spreading not just the benefits of modern capitalism, but also the joys of civilization. Empire really was a system that sought to implant European culture around the world, because of its proponents' firm

belief in its innate superiority. The "civilizing mission" was a public justification for economic expansion, but it was more than just an ideological smoke screen. Young English, French, American and Dutch administrators and technocrats who left for the colonies and possessions were often true believers, who had a missionary zeal about their work. Rather than adapting themselves to the local food and customs, they demanded that locals adopt theirs. The English administrator in Belize at the turn of the nineteenth century wanted an English dinner, even if it had to be poured from cans.

Globalization at the turn of the twenty-first century has a different cultural shape. While the economy of the colonial period seemed completely interwoven with the missionary goal of cultural uniformity, global capitalism today has made peace with cultural diversity. Partially this is the simple result of a change in the nature of the world economy, which is no longer based entirely on the flow of material goods. Instead "services" are now imported and exported and "outsourced." The largest and most aggressive multinational corporations are taking over services like water, electricity, garbage disposal and insurance in countries all over the world. None of this expansion requires that people give up their own culture. It helps if they learn English, but it makes no difference at all if they want to wear a turban or fast for Ramadan.

The influence of tourism, the world's largest industry, is even more pervasive. On the one hand, tourism requires a dramatic economic restructuring of people's lives in a place like Belize. Tourists want air-conditioning and smooth roads, safe streets, polite waiters and clean beaches. This requires an enormous concentration of capital and construction; it draws people from wide areas to provide services, often in a relatively small tourist enclave on a coast or in picturesque mountains. Even ecotourists who wander through the rest of the country want running water, educated guides and a clean mosquito-free bed at night.

The global tourist industry pushes culture in entirely the opposite direction from earlier colonialism and imperialism. Instead of demanding just the spread of European civilization, tourists also revel in everything local, different, "cultural." On the one hand, they want their international-style clean room with a telephone and color TV, and, on the other hand, they want to experience the *real* Belize. The kind of cultural diversity that tourists want is the safe, domestic form. It is a performed difference, coded in distinctive music, dress, dance and food.[17] It is not the threatening in-your-face kind of ethnicity – the hostile faces of people who resent having their sacred places profaned by visitors, or their rivers dammed up to provide golf courses for the hotels. In the tourist world, culture is an object that can be detached from the people who produce it, shared and even experienced by the visitor, who wants to go home with the taste of "real Belizean food" in their memory. And there is no question that producing and performing culture for tourists can be a decent-paying job. You can make a good living cooking up the

right mixture of exotic and familiar, at least compared to the other options, which might include scavenging from garbage heaps or piecework in a Chinese shirt factory. And at least some farmers can make a living producing the eggs, mangos and avocados for the hotel's breakfast table.

A world where culture and the political economy are disconnected from one another can be a peculiar place, filled with ironies, backstage jokes and hidden tragedy. A Guatemalan woman might see her grandmother's old worn-out woven shirts sold for pennies then become valuable collector's items. A Belizean farmer may find that the birds he has always killed and eaten are now exotic endangered wildlife that attract thousands of birdwatchers. Old traditions may be revived, but then performed completely out of context so they have no real meaning to the participants. American Peace Corps volunteers teach rural villagers to make stone carvings based on ancient artifacts, which then become a traditional local craft. Lobster, once a food for the poor, becomes so expensive that no local person can afford to eat it any more.

These ironic disconnections can be painful and grotesque when seen from the point of view of poor people who are having their culture taken, appropriated and used for the profit of others. What does it feel like for the Asaro people of New Guinea to have their sacred religious dances performed by well-off Australians in an advertisement for an airline?[18] What do you want to eat after a day of serving up jerked chicken to tourists on the beach? Does it hurt a country when "folk" music changes from something everyone sings, to something everyone hears at concerts or on local television?

These are subtle and profound questions, much debated among anthropologists, folklorists and other academics, as well as by media professionals and in popular culture. But my fundamental point is that cultural diversity is hardly in danger of dying out. Culture has become a key commodity in the world economy and a basic tool of government. The question, though, is what kind of relationship this performed, self-conscious kind of culture has to the practices of everyday life, and how well it is grounded in ecological and economic realities. Is public, performed culture sustainable, or does it merely become a tool, an artifact that is quickly taken out of the hands that made it and used for other purposes? When we think about cuisine as a part of culture in this way, we can easily see the dangers involved in taking cooking and recipes out of popular culture and putting them in the hands of marketers, tourist impresarios and the celebrity chefs of expensive restaurants. What happens to a cuisine cut off from its roots in everyday kitchens, in the hard work of farmers and the bustle of the marketplace? We can also turn the question around to ask what happens to a *country* where that connection is severed.

Biodiversity and Culidiversity

I will use the term *culidiversity* to refer to the diversity of cuisine and recognized styles of cooking in a region. As I said above, because of the tourist economy, culidiversity is not dying out. If anything, as world incomes rise and communications and global travel increase, there is more, rather than less, culidiversity than there was under the crushing influence of nineteenth-century nation states, intent on imposing a uniform culture in their entire territory. Culidiversity is probably being rearranged in important ways that are not yet clear; we may be seeing more diversity in some places and less in others, or more diversity within cities, and less between different cities. Certainly we no longer see a world where the diversity of cuisine can be understood as a series of uniform little regions or territories, each with its own distinctive flavors. Instead, the culidiversity of the twenty-first century has less and less connection to local products, to the ecological zonation, histories of human modification and land use and peculiarities of climate, soil and geography that cause biodiversity in the physical environment. Should we be worried that what people eat is no longer limited by location? Is it tragic that industrial production methods and burgeoning world food trade have freed culidiversity from the constraints of geography?

One possibility is that there is no reason to worry, that local culture and the local economy do not *have* to be connected. Orthodox economists tell us that when free trade moves food from the countries where it is cheap to produce to those which can pay more, everyone is better off. It should improve everyone's standards of living. Why should a country like Belize or Nigeria worry that its basic foods are imported from rich countries which pour subsidies into efficient "factory farming?" If farmers in Kansas and Louisiana can feed the world cheap rice and wheat, where is the problem? Why should we worry when cheap American frozen chicken arrives in Senegal, and drives more expensive local birds out of the market? Interdependence, say the advocates of free trade, promotes political stability and prosperity. Perhaps ideas like local food security or self-sufficiency are outdated and unrealistic, or simply a product of nostalgia.[19]

On the contrary, I would argue that Prime Minister Said Musa of Belize is right, that there are good economic and social reasons why nations and regions should still be concerned with promoting local food production, and protecting at least part of their food economy from imports.[20] These are long-term problems that outweigh the short-term benefits of cheap imported convenience food on the store shelves.

At the top of my list is the fact that more than half of Belize's population is still rural, and are involved in various ways in farming. Export crops like bananas and citrus offer low-paying jobs for landless workers on large farms, while intensive food production on small farms could provide a viable livelihood if there were a

steady market for high-quality products. Small farmers in Belize are never going to be able to compete with large mechanized operations for bulk crops like rice, corn and beans. Belizean farmers only have an advantage in specialty crops, niche markets and high-value products like organic foods, many of which are already in demand to feed tourists. A viable farm economy would keep people stably settled, instead of migrating to cities or out of the country altogether, at a time when there simply are not enough jobs in tourism and in the cities for all Belizeans.

At a more basic level, countries that cannot feed themselves are in a position of economic and political dependency. Of course all countries depend to some extent on foreign trade. One cannot imagine the US food economy without cheap imported oil or imported Mexican farm workers, but we can also see how this constrains, distorts and limits US political options.[21] Today Belize is far more dependent on imports than the US or any other rich country; furthermore it exports luxuries and imports necessities. As we saw in previous world wars, this leaves the country vulnerable to disruptions of supply and sudden rises in prices. The whole country was paralyzed for months in the late 1970s when gasoline imports were suddenly reduced. Today we should also consider the possibility of disruptions in finance, monetary crisis and rising debt that could make it difficult to buy needed supplies.

Even if supplies are reliable, being a food importer means that Belize has little control over the *quality* of the food it consumes. The problem may not be as severe as in the eighteenth century, when nobody really knew what was in a barrel of salt pork, but today the chemical and genetic variety of food contents is immeasurably greater. Belize is not in a position to decide if the country will eat genetically modified corn, or irradiated meat, or test for toxic chemical residues, unless producing countries decide to require it. As a small market they have little power to ask for higher standards from producers and exporters.

Food labels in the USA and the EU have to reveal the full contents and nutritional properties of packages, but the same companies put less informative labels on their exports to poor countries. This opens up the possibility that countries are dumping contaminated or substandard products they cannot sell at home onto foreign consumers, just as the pharmaceutical industry is suspected of doing. And without huge and expensive laboratories and the money to fund a testing program, Belize just has to eat what it gets, and hope that it is not poisonous. At least in the old days you could tell when the pork was spoiled. Now if beef is contaminated with *E. coli* you may not know until your children get sick, and you may never know if your ground beef came from a cow with BSE.

Food quality is only a problem if you have the money to buy food in the first place. Belize is not impoverished compared to its neighbors, but there are still plenty of poor people, and surveys always find a substantial fraction (from 10 to 30 percent depending on definitions) of children who are malnourished. This is one

good reason for a government to interfere with free markets for food, to subsidize basic foodstuffs for hungry people. In rich countries this subsidy supports prices for domestic food, therefore supporting farmers. When poor countries subsidize food imports to feed the poor, they are also supporting farmers in rich countries, when they would be a lot better subsidizing their own. There is no reason why food support policies should not be used to promote the kinds of local farm production that are going to be best for the country in the long term, including organics.

Agricultural policy in places like Belize has typically been aimed toward generic export crops or a few basic foods for the local market, and the goal is always to increase productivity with improved seeds, farm technology, fertilizers and pesticides. Decades of studies have shown how unsustainable this kind of mechanized farming is on fragile tropical soils, in comparison to smaller-scale and more intensive farms using polyculture, locally adapted crop varieties, biological pest controls and organic methods. Producing more food for a local market using methods like this would be much easier on the environment, and more likely to preserve biodiversity, which is now the main attraction for the tourism business. Instead of pursuing ever-changing and difficult export markets for generic tropical products like sugar, Belize would be much better off reorienting agriculture toward high-quality diverse foods for the local and regional tourist market. Right now a great deal of the money tourists spend in Belize goes right back out of the country to buy expensive imported food for their meals.

Even in the most optimistic scenario for Belize and other poor countries, food trade is never going to disappear, and there will probably be no return to clumsy government price and market controls like those instituted by the British Empire. The choices governments make cannot be reduced to "free trade versus protectionism," whatever the political ideologues say.[22] Trade must become fairer, and future trade regulation has to pay as much attention to food quality, damage to the environment, and the rights of workers as it presently does to the interests of agribusiness and the farm lobbies of rich countries. It is time for Belizeans to think more about the quality of food as well as the quantity, and to ask if sometimes farmers and consumers are better served by less trade, less technology and less distance between farm and market.

Home Cooking

Chefs and everyday cooks can have a major role in pushing Belize along toward a more sustainable future. This means, however, that future Belizean cuisine cannot be handed to foreign chefs, who will create "tropical" dishes out of imported products, and then put a slice of pineapple on top and call it "Belizean." Chefs have to take the lead in showing Belizeans and tourists that there are delicious local alternatives to pizza and Subway sandwiches, that Belize has rainforests full

of ingredients that can easily beat imports. A neo-Belizean cuisine built without local knowledge, pride and participation can only perpetuate dependency and keep Belize both economically and culturally impoverished.[23]

Reconnecting culidiversity and biodiversity has the potential to revitalize and benefit both. An active market for local fresh foods and spices could support small-scale agriculture in the Belize countryside, revive interest in exotic and rare varieties of fruits and vegetables and build a market for handmade products and organic produce. Food could even become a reason why people go to Belize, instead of being something they ignore or endure. All around North America and Europe there are active movements to find new ways to connect producers and consumers through greenmarkets, CSAs, fair-trade certification and farm–community alliances.[24] Others seek bridges between farmers and restaurateurs, and support rare and endangered crops, varieties and handmade food products. In rural Belize the diverse landscape of family farms and local markets has not yet disappeared, but why should we wait for it to become endangered before we find ways to support and nurture it?

One of the greatest problems Belize has faced over the last three centuries has been the sense that the country is stuck in the past, which means that people are always looking to developed rich countries for the next bright idea that will solve their problems and lift them out of their peripheral position in the world. But centuries of borrowing from England and America have left Belize just as far behind as ever, still struggling to catch up. With this record, why should Belize look to the slow food movement or the bioregionalists or any other group in the rich North for ideas about making the local food situation better?[25]

To be realistic, I doubt that slow food, bioregionalism or an obsession with authenticity provide viable and convincing alternatives, the kind of vision that can move a nation or push a government to change its policies in the face of rich and powerful interests. Maybe a different approach would be to return to the very old and well-worn concept of *home cooking*. Not literally, in the sense of "cooking at the hearth," but metaphorically in the sense that a group of friends or families, a town or a country can also be "home." In today's world, home may include both a house in a rural Belizean village and an apartment on the north side of Chicago at the same time.

Metaphorically *home cooking* means a cuisine grounded in familiar, shared history and in common knowledge of places and people. Home cooking is always concerned with quality, because people you care about will eat the meal. *Home making* is a social process of transformation, the magic that makes the anonymous commodity into something unique, with an individual identity, a *name* instead of a brand.

In real home cooking, quality and economy have to find a place together. Home cooking is economical instead of wasteful, pragmatic because of the need to feed

a whole family from limited resources. Compromises must be made, but the well-being of the family is the bottom line. Physical nutrition of the body is complemented by the nourishment of the person. Home cooking is grounded in a past and a particular place; it is all about origins. But a home is always a place where people raised in different families come together to combine and recombine their own traditions.

Home cooking is never a mechanical reproduction of the past. Different traditions and versions of the past are melded and recombined into something new, then handed down to the next generation, not as a hidebound set of rules, but as an assortment of recipes and a set of values to guide the new family in a changing world. Home cooking is humane, founded in the best aspects of social life, cooperation, generosity and compassion, and willingness to work together even when it means sacrifice and compromise.

In a global economy of constant flow and movement, *homeless* is *powerless*, at the mercy of the tides and currents, unable to find a place of refuge. But a home is not an economy or a world in itself – it is in the world and of the world at the same time that it has its own boundaries. Homes are not little states, and a world of home cooking does not require the destruction of the global economy. It just ensures that people have a place to live where they are protected from the worst tendencies of that economy.

You have to admire the way the Belizean spirit keeps struggling to the surface after every wave, against all odds putting together something unique from the bits and pieces of debris left behind by colonists and empire. You have to be nimble and creative to survive and find an identity in the unstable breaking surf out on the edges of the world capitalist sea. Belizeans are survivors who still manage to find joy and build homes in difficult times, even though foreigners own most of their country's resources. Belize shows it is possible to have real home cooking even in the most exposed parts of the global economy, but home cooking in Belize is in a precarious state. It could use some help.

This could mean a reorientation of agricultural policy to nurture and support the kinds of small-scale farming that has always been marginalized or ignored by agronomists and agricultural economists. Towns and villages might do a lot more to encourage traders and street markets instead of pushing them out of city centers and squeezing them into old decaying buildings. Supermarket owners and retailers could make much more room for local products, giving them the same kind of exposure and advertising they devote to imported frozen pizza. A lot has already been done to help local food processing and packaging get off the ground, but it is still hard to get credit and technical advice, especially for people in rural areas who lack a formal business education.

Perhaps most important, it is time for restaurateurs and chefs to pay more attention to Belizean foodways – not just borrowing local ingredients to cook

exotic-sounding tropical dishes, but also actually building on the traditions and the cuisine to get Belizean food into the best restaurants. It is certainly a great thing for foreigners to come and train Belizean chefs to get into the restaurant business, but those foreigners also need to learn something from local cooks about unique fresh vegetables, herbs, spices and indigenous methods of blending, seasoning and cooking.

Home cooking means that food must be an intimate part of daily life and culture, rooted in a social economy and a physical environment. The future of Belizean food depends ultimately on the fate of the country as a whole. If the small farms, gardens, orchards, and the forests, streams and reefs that support hunters and fishing villages disappear, the only thing left will be factory farms, agroindustries and merchants busy importing and exporting. Home cooking holds out an alternative prospect, a future where the diversity of Belizean food and culture survive and flourish, even surrounded by an ever-changing global village.

Recipe: Rice and Beans[26]

1 lb (450 g) dried red kidney beans (substitute a can if you are in a hurry)
½ lb (225 g) salted pigtail, salt pork, or cured pork hock
8 cups (1.9 l) water
2 cloves garlic
1 large onion, chopped
12-oz (355-ml) can coconut milk
1 teaspoon (5 g) black pepper
1 teaspoon (5 g) salt
½ teaspoon (5 g) thyme or ground allspice
2 lbs (900 g) long-grained rice

Soak beans overnight, or for a minimum of 4 hours.

Boil the pigtail or salt pork once for about five minutes to remove salt, and discard the water – repeat if necessary.

Cook beans in a covered pot in the water, with garlic, chopped onion and meat, until tender (or use pressure cooker).

Add coconut milk, black pepper and salt, and thyme or ground allspice, then cook for about 10 more minutes.

Add the dry rice and stir thoroughly. Cover well and cook over low flame until all the water is absorbed and the rice is tender (about 25 minutes). Add a small quantity of extra water if needed, but don't worry if a crust forms on the bottom – it's very tasty.

Notes

1 The Global Supermarket

1. Fifteen-hundred miles is a widely cited average for 1985, so the distance is probably greater now; many goods travel further. Sugar, for example, travels more than 10,000 miles (see Hendrickson 1996). This is just counting the ingredients of food: packages are also prodigious travelers so even a simple yoghurt container may go thousands of miles (Boge 1995). Waldman's figure of 30,000 food items refers to the mid 1990s; in today's supercenters there are many more (1999: 360). Ryan and Durning (1997) approach the whole question of how to account for the various economic, environmental and social costs of the goods we consume everyday.
2. There are many opinions about the future of global food production and population growth. Production continues to rise only because of cheap fossil fuels, increasingly expensive technology, wasteful use of scarce irrigation water, overharvesting the ocean and continued clearance of forests and grasslands (Goodman and Redclift 1991). As the cost of water and fuel goes up, the oceans are despoiled, and new land is no longer available; the cost of food will rise, but the amount produced may still keep up with population growth.
3. Amartya Sen (1981).
4. Redclift (1996).
5. For an excellent introduction to the cultural meanings of food see Counihan (1999).
6. Berry likes to take provocative positions. In the same article he goes so far as to claim that "we cannot be free if our food and its sources are controlled by someone else" (1999: 368). This seems to be saying that any kind of market exchange is corrupting, and we cannot trust any organization or anonymous "other" person with our food supply. It is hard to see how it would ever be practical to turn back the clock in this way, and I worry that such a stance can appeal to xenophobia. Gary Nabhan (2002) has more positive arguments for eating close to home.
7. In an unpublished paper (1997b – available on the Web at www.indiana.edu/~wanthro/aarhus.htm, also Wilk 1997a) I argue that simple moral

stories and dichotomies underlie a good deal of social science, which often serves the role of retelling prophetic, utopic and dystopic stories using the language of scientific certainty.

8. This is why fast food has become such a hot political issue in Europe, where it has come to symbolize American consumer monoculture (see Bové and Dufour 2001, for example), and has sparked the origin of the "slow food" movement (Petrini 2001). At the same time, however, the mass of consumers in Europe have welcomed McDonald's and other fast-food chains.
9. Along with many others, I have written at some length about the way globalization has become part of the way people all around the world think about themselves and their culture (Wilk 1995b, 1997a; for more detail see the literature review in Kearney 1995). Ironically, the very idea of globalization destroying local culture is itself one of the most global phenomena, carrying with it very specific western ideas about culture and change (Wilk 1999a; Holtzman 2004). In almost every place, the response is a revival or creation of local traditions of food, music, dance and dress, all of which are "safe" aspects of ethnicity that are usually encouraged by governments and traditional authorities alike.
10. Huntington (1996) is only one of many recent authors who believe that Western culture is uniquely rational, peaceful and free. The idea that cultural diversity inevitably leads to conflict is not founded in historical fact, but instead reflects the nineteenth-century nationalistic idea that a nation state must have a uniform culture. The problem is, of course, that many people don't find Western culture superior, and they are not ready to give up their own traditions just because Harvard professors tell them it's in their best interest.
11. Friedman (1990, 1992, 1994b) has done foundational work that defines these options, though he does not use my labels for them. Pieterse (2003) gives an important counterpoint.
12. Hannerz (1987); the thesis is expanded in Hannerz (1990), and adapted by Pieterse (1995).
13. For example, Tobin (1992).
14. Whiting (1977).
15. The theme of cultural imperialism has deep intellectual roots in the West and is ably discussed by Tomlinson (1991).
16. This paper has been reprinted innumerable times since it first appeared in 1936.
17. Watson (1997). McDonald's has spawned a whole literature in the social sciences, including Ritzer's influential idea of McDonaldization (1998, 2000). An original perspective on Ronald's arrival in Asia can be found in Lukens-Bull (2003).

18. This point of view is mostly attributed to the British cultural studies scholars working on consumer culture in the 1990s; a good example is du Gay (1997). At the time I found this work a refreshing antidote to the litany of consumer "brainwashing" which is a powerful legacy of the Frankfurt school theorists.
19. This line comes from the title of Postman's book about American television (1986). All the kinds of cultural encounters discussed here are clearly dissected in a very vivid way in Chapters 5–7 of Flusty (2004).
20. Standage (1999).
21. Rauch (2004).
22. There is a huge amount of writing on the crisis of anthropology's concept of culture, much of it traceable to a key work by Wolf (1982).
23. See Miller (1994); excellent discussions about Caribbean distinctiveness in Olwig (1993a, 1999); and a recent summary by Slocum and Thomas (2003).
24. Barndt (2002); this kind of work falls into a category academics call "commodity chain analysis" (Gereffi and Korzeniewicz 1994), which has been applied to goods as diverse as microchips and concrete. The recent film *Made in China* follows plastic beads from a factory in China to the Mardi-Gras parade in New Orleans (http://www.calleymedia.org/home.htm).

2 Globalization through Food

1. I would still insist that hunger and inequality is the most serious issue in the global food system.
2. Counihan and Van Esterik (1997) is a good general reader on the recent anthropology of food, and Mintz (1996) gives an easy topical introduction. Sutton (2001) and Seremetakis (1994) are intimate accounts of the way food and memory are intertwined in creating identity. A trend is to pick one food or product and trace it through history, the kind of "social life of things" advocated by Kopytoff (1986). Recent examples include books on codfish, salt, eels, coffee, tobacco, spices and potatoes. Douglas' famous essay on the order of dishes in a meal also reveals much about the way food forms a visceral, felt, cultural order (1971).
3. Throughout the colonial world of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, colonizers made distinctions between "native" and European food, and one way they categorized the different races or ethnic groups under their control was through the kinds of foods they ate. The study of food and colonialism is largely unexplored, though there is much work on the way colonialism worked to create, manipulate and undermine ethnic and racial categories; see Fabian (1983), Chatterjee (1986), Smith (1986), Eriksen (1993), Thomas (1994), Wilmsen and McAllister (1996).
4. Andrae and Beckman (1985).

5. The Romans shipped huge amounts of grain, olive oil, dried fruit, anchovy paste and wine around the Mediterranean, and even during medieval times, substantial amounts of food moved through European markets (Braudel 1982).
6. Mintz (1979, 1985).
7. For example, Swedes consider their taste for salted licorice to be part of their national character, and many cities and provinces throughout Europe are known for a local and emblematic confection.
8. There are of course exceptions, like the demerara sugar which originally came from a region of Guyana, and more recently organic and "natural" sugars, but these have always been a small portion of the market. On the history of commodities in general, see Rowling (1987). Marx on commodity fetishism is thoroughly discussed by Miller (1987) and many others.
9. Kuwayama (2003: 11).
10. The "Sappeurs" of Congo, who compete for status with French fashions, are a good example (Friedman 1994a, 1994b). Burke makes a similar point in Zimbabwe, where metropolitan merchants were ignorant of how their products were consumed in Zimbabwe at the same time that Zimbabweans were deeply involved in learning about the producers (1996). Wilk (1999a) discusses the importance of being a sophisticated consumer in Belize. The difference between north and south is a matter of degree, not kind, since there are many goods sold in metropolitan centers that are identified and valued by their origins. It is easy to list things like Turkish tobacco, rainforest crunch, Hawaiian pineapple and Blue Mountain coffee that can be found all over Europe and North America, but these are luxuries. Gourmets know the difference between Bordeaux and Burgundy, Serrano and Parma ham. But a much broader part of the Belizean public pays attention to where things come from. In Belize there is much greater meaning to the choice of local or imported peanut butter than there would be for, say, choice of cars in the United States. This issue of quality and origins has a long history in the global marketplace, which I will trace through the following chapters.
11. Mintz (1985); see Walvin (1997) for examples of this focus on the role of metropolitan consumption in the development of world trade.
12. Forced buying at low prices and selling at high rates to rural people, a practice called *repartimiento*, was one of the more effective ways that the Spanish colonial empire raised revenue.
13. Sutherland (1998) gives a history of Mom's.
14. Miller (1993) includes comparative studies of Christmas in a number of cultures, including his own work in Trinadad.
15. Johnson later returned to Crooked Tree to research her dissertation (1998).

16. Sanchez was one of the initial promoters of the national "REAP" (Relevant Education for Agricultural Production) curriculum for teaching appreciation of local farming in primary schools. He compiled over fifty recipes and information on daily diets for this book.
17. I discuss the impact of television on Belize in several papers (1993a, 1994, 2002). During this time I was also drawn into the world of beauty pageants, since these were places where people talked a lot about Belizean culture (Wilk 1993b, 1995a).
18. "The Jewel" as a nickname for Belize was popularized by a radio host in the late 1990s.
19. I am happy to admit that I am only an amateur historian, economist and agronomist, and can never reach professional standards in all fields. Such are the perils of cross-disciplinary research.
20. For discussion of the reading of cookbooks for cultural information see Brownlie *et al*. (2005) and Valle (1997); on history and gender see Murcott (1983), Leach and Tobias (1998), and on multiple recipes for the same dish, Leach and Inglis (2003).

3 Pirates and Baymen

1. Pilcher (2000) and Keegan (2000), also Super (1988) on the Hispanic Caribbean.
2. Dixon (2001) gives a fascinating account of the way Pepys' personal attitudes about conspicuous consumption changed as he rose in rank and status. See also various editions of Pepys' diary, and Rodger (1999) on the growth of European navies.
3. On the working lives of Atlantic sailors, see Rediker (1987), and for firsthand accounts King and Hattendorf (1997).
4. On the growing demand for drug foods and other tropical commodities, see Mintz (1985), Walvin (1997), Pendergrast (1999), Courtright (2001) and Bayly (2002). Good sources for early consumerism in Europe are Mukerji (1983), Schama (1988), and for the Renaissance see Jardine (1998).
5. See McCusker (1997) and McCusker and Menard (1991); for a good description of the political culture of buccaneers see Bromley (1988).
6. Smith (2000) tells how the turtle economy worked.
7. Dampier (1906: 178–179).
8. On buccaneers see Marx (1992) and Haring (1966: 34) who mentions Spanish ships buying or stealing cassava bread for ship's provisions. Pennell (2001) is an excellent recent scholarly collection. On the influence of indigenous Arawakan food on European colonists see Keegan (2000) and Exquemelin (1924: 45).

9. The story of the two surviving crewmen has been told many times (see Sharer and Morley 1994: 732–733).
10. The history of Spanish activity in Belize has been the life work of Grant Jones (1976, 1991, 1998), and the archeology of the period is well known due to the efforts of Graham (1991) and Pendergast (1991).
11. Pawson and Buissert (2000) have a brief and concise discussion of the repression of buccaneers and pirates.
12. Finamore (1994) has a thorough discussion of the uses of logwood, also Craig (1969). Much less has been written about fustian.
13. Early British colonization is summarized by Finamore (1994, 2002), and discussed by Marcus (1990), Gregg (1968: 6–8) and Donohoe (1946) and in standard histories of Belize (Caiger 1951; Dobson 1973; Bolland 1977). The poor documentation of the period has led to much room for speculation (Calderon 1944; Winzerling 1946; Waddell 1961; Gerhard 1979, Setzekorn 1981: 127–129), and the *Honduras Almanacs* of 1828 and 1829 also give a number of stories. The most reliable historian, Bolland (1977: 25), opts for the 1670s or even later.
14. Taussig (1980) discusses the magical power that exotic tropical remedies had on urban European culture. Cascarilla (*Croton eluteria*) is the bark of a small tree that was used to treat diarrhea and nausea, Earlier the term was also applied to cinchona, the source of quinine to treat malaria.
15. Ward (1756: 66–68).
16. Roth (1998).
17. Nelson (2001).
18. On Spanish rations, see Hamilton (1929: 432–435), for British, Falconer (1815), O'Brian (1974) and Mountaine (1756). Yonge complained of the awful rations on Dutch ships in the late 1600s (Poynter 1963: 91–93).
19. Falconer (1815) gives an early account of manufacturing sea biscuits. For work on marine diets including tasty recipes see Oliver (1995) and Grossman and Thomas (1997).
20. On the famine see Donnelley (2001); for British food policy of the era Davis (2001).
21. Kemp and Lloyd (1960) mention several instances where slave women were carried on board pirate ships. Exquemelin discusses in some detail logwood cutters in Yucatan "buying" Mayan women who then "serves" and "brings him victuals of all sorts the country affords" (1924: 233).
22. Dampier (1906: 192).
23. Lynch to Arlington, March 10, 1671, CO 1/28, no. 127. Cited in Marcus (1990: 41).
24. Marine Research Society (1924).
25. Craig (1969: 56); also see Joseph (1974).

26. Nevertheless, a 1787 map clearly shows "provision grounds" on the riverbank across from the main settlement. Burdon (1931, volume 1, 154, 163), discussed by Finamore (1994: 103–106).
27. This is recounted in the voyage of the pirate Woodes Rogers (Kemp and Lloyd 1960: 166–167).
28. Exquemelin (1924: 59).
29. Rediker (1987: 254–286).
30. Fiddes (1991: chapt. 7).
31. Dampier (1906: 160–170).
32. Uring (1928: 242).
33. These taboos are not universal and Sahlins (1976) sees them as a consequence of the structural way that Europeans classify the world into living and dead (following from Mary Douglas' earlier analysis of biblical food taboos).
34. See, for example, Cook (1769).
35. Henderson (1811: 125).
36. D. C. Simmonds (2001: 74).
37. Exquemelin (1987: 228).
38. Henderson (1811: 127).
39. Clarke (1999) has a wonderfully evocative chapter on pig-foot souse in Barbados, which includes a recipe.
40. Peter Simmonds (2001: 176).
41. Hannah Glasse gives a typical recipe that involves an astonishing number of steps and ingredients, ending up with a presentation at table reassembled in the shell (1805: 227–229, first edition 1747).
42. Captain Henderson (1811) gives the best description of turtling practices in Belize.
43. Hicatee livers quoted by Simmonds (2001: 172); as a local specialty see Kennedy (1885: 294).
44. (1906: 118). Tarpon is generally considered inedible in the USA today, but is eaten often in Belize, usually barbecued whole on a stick and then flaked.
45. Uring (1928: 243).
46. See Morris (1883: 22) on tropical trout.
47. Fish sellers continue to rename fish in order to get people to eat the unfamiliar: so spotted dogfish becomes "rock salmon" and hideous anglerfish become saintly "monkfish." Gibbs (1883: 187) on the delights of mountain mullet.
48. Exquemelin lists crabs as food for slaves and servants (1924: 17).
49. See Sutton (2001) for a thorough discussion of food as sense and bodily memory.
50. One can speculate that keeping the taste of home is actually an effective response to relocation, to maintain an internal sense of order to compensate for lacking external control.

51. Boteler quoted in Masefield (1922: 259).
52. Dampier (1906: 123).
53. For a modern recipe see Grossman and Thomas (1997: 105). On land, eggs were usually added to boiled puddings; for contemporary recipes see any edition of Hannah Glasse. Isabella Beeton's *The Book of Household Management* from 1861 also has suet puddings.
54. Marx (1973); Epicurious (2003).
55. Discussed at some length in Flandrin (2000) and Albala (2000), and an excellent summary is Bogumil (2002).
56. Salinger (2002) discusses drinking patterns of the era. In the ballad "The Ancient Buccaneers" a line commands "Drink Logwood Measure, Mate." A note says a logwood cutter's measure is a gallon and a half per man (Visiak 1910: 41).
57. Ward (1756).
58. Dampier (1906: 123); also Marx (1992: 233) and Uring (1928: 242).
59. Dampier (1906: 122).
60. Exquemelin (1987: 68).
61. Uring (1928: 241–242).
62. Uring (1928: 242).
63. Counihan (1999) is an excellent collection on food and gender.
64. This formal setting may actually be the result of 450 years of contact with Europeans and Christianity and a way of showing deference to the customs of powerful outsiders.
65. Belich gives excellent examples of hyper-correct European behavior in his study of New Zealand culture (1996). In many ways the upper class in New Zealand was more English than the English themselves. This is not unique to European expatriates. For example, studies of Turkish migrant communities in northern Europe find them much more conservative and bound by "Turkish" customs than the communities they left behind in Turkey, which have changed quite a bit since they left (Ger and Østergaard 1998).
66. Historians disagree about when "consumer culture" began in Europe, but there is no question that competition for expensive luxury clothing, jewelry, houses, furnishings, servants, livestock, and food was very important in aristocratic circles, and particularly royal courts, as early as the fifteenth century (see McCracken 1988).
67. Linebaugh and Rediker (2000) would disagree; they point to the example of Col. Edward Despard, who challenged the established hierarchy in the British settlement in The Bay during his tenure as superintendent beginning in 1784.
68. Captain John Smith (published 1653 but written in the 1620s), quoted in Masefield (1922: 257). Canarie Sack was a dry white wine exported from the Canary Islands, and imported by the British from at least 1530. Aqua-vitae is

an early term for distilled spirits of any sort, often brandy made from wine. The mention of "waters" is intriguing, as the plural usually meant mineral water. This is the first mention I have found of mineral water being packaged, likely in jugs or glass bottles, for export from Europe, probably for its medicinal qualities. A gammon of bacon was what we would call a smoked ham today, often with some of the belly attached. A "neat" means an ox in this context; ox-tongue was larger and more highly valued than beef. There are a number of recipes in Glasse and other early English cookbooks for meats preserved in vinegar or potted in earthenware and preserved with fat ("sewet" meaning suet, beef fat). On the early history of food preservation, see Shephard (2000) or Thorne (1986). Suckets are fruits preserved in sugar, either soft or hardened, and comfits were hardened sugar around a nut often an almond, or a seed like caraway.

69. See Mintz (1985) on sugar becoming less elite as it became cheaper. Mennel (1995) discusses the decline in nuts and heavy spices and the rise of reduced sauces, as French aristocratic food became standard in Europe in the eighteenth century.
70. I use "raw" here literally rather than metaphorically. The transformation of West Indian sugar into an English product is a physical process of "refining" and packaging, but it is also a clear example of what anthropologists call contagious magic, where physical contact passes a supernatural force of identity from a person or place to an object. The sugar acquires the power of an English identity through its physical contact and proximity with England itself. Its old identity is either washed away entirely, or it becomes a generalized "exotic" or "tropical" origin. This happens with curry powder, for example, a popular item in much of the British Empire even today. The powders from India and other Asian countries are packaged in the UK and sold around the world by a multinational company with an English name like Crosse & Blackwell. The "genuine Indian" origin lies in the background as a sign of authenticity, but the foreground agent who guarantees quality, hygiene, domesticity and consistency is British.
71. Salted fish that has been thoroughly soaked, or pickled fish, particularly herring, are closer to what the pirates ate than canned fish. This recipe is an adaptation from the 1747 edition Hannah Glasse's *The Art of Cookery*, published by *Food History News* (1996 8(1): 3) and available online at http://foodhistorynews.com/recipes.html.

4 Slaves, Masters and Mahogany

1. HGCA 1(2), 7/8/1826.
2. Again Pilcher (2000) and Keegan (2000) give a good brief summary of

African ancestry. Mackie (1991) is one of the best popular historical cookbooks, while Spivey (1999) is a work of imagination rather than scholarship.

3. See Shaw (1980) on the precarious and unstable government in the early settlement. Bolland (1977) and Shoman (1994) are also useful and reliable.
4. Marcus (1990: 47), Burns (1954).
5. Marcus (1990: 79).
6. Weaver and Sabido (1997: 10) say that income from mahogany first exceeded that from logwood in 1771. They note a mahogany tree in 1774 that was almost 4 m in diameter!
7. Payson (1926: 51) says "Scores of great mahogany double doors three inches in thickness are used in the building. These are usually of four panels to each leaf – two large and two small panels …" Sir Thomas Robinson, by letter to Lord Carlisle of December, 1730, in speaking of Houghton and the great hall says "Vast quantities of mahogany, chimneys of statuary, and walls hung with Genoese velvets and damasks in such profusion as to be equal to the cost of a good house." On furniture see Cornelius (1926), Schmieg (1926) and any history of furniture on use of mahogany in the eighteenth century, championed by designers like Chippendale. I have seen tables in English stately homes made from single boards of highly figured mahogany over 20 cm thick, 1.75 m across, and 8 m long. Mahogany shrinks and swells very little with changes in humidity and rarely cracks, which made it an important material for railway carriages and the interiors of steamships. Record and Mell (1924: 348) also discuss the early history of mahogany, suggesting that it might have been used in Nottingham castle as early as 1660.
8. Bolland (1977: 156–173, and 1988: 19).
9. Later treaties allowed limited farming (Bolland and Shoman 1977: 24). The diplomatic issues are covered in all the standard histories and Humphreys (1961). While the fear of Guatemalan invasion has subsided since the 1980s, every time the Guatemalan government seems on the brink of settling the issue, it backs down.
10. Bolland (1977) is by far the best source on eighteenth-century Belize. Henderson (1811, 1817) discusses the 1779 removal to Havana, and a somewhat dramatic account is found in the 1828 *Honduras Almanac*.
11. The St George's Cay battle has been a focus of ethnic, party political and nationalist debate in Belize since the late nineteenth century, with some denying the battle ever really took place, and others elevating it to the shining moment of ethnic unity and the foundation of national consciousness.
12. The Mosquito Shore settlers who came to Belize in 1787 were deeply engaged farmers, and claimed compensation for numerous pastures and "provision grounds," as well as plantations of sugar and coffee. There is no reason to think that the settlers in Belize were any different. Dalling's letter of 1779, quoted by

Bolland (1988: 25) says that the settlers "have Plantations which they visit occasionally, where they employ their slaves in raising provisions and cutting logwood … extending along the banks of several rivers … for 100 miles and upwards …" The disruption in food trade caused by the American Revolution is discussed in Berlin and Morgan (1991) McCusker and Menard (1991), and Joseph (1974). Also see Breuer (1993) on British Central America.

13. Indian slavery is not well documented. The practices in the Bay of Honduras are attested in White (1793), Shaw (1980) and the two "Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry on the case of the Indians at Honduras," in British Parliamentary papers from 1828 and 1830.
14. Bolland (1977, 1988, 1997) is the authority on slavery in Belize; the colonial elites always made a lot of noise about how lenient and benign slavery in Belize had been. During the nationalist movement of the 1960s and 1970s this story was widely debunked with good evidence that slaves were badly mistreated by their masters, and often ran away or rebelled. The remembrance and interpretation of slavery is still a sensitive and volatile issue in Belize, as in all places where slavery has left its legacy.
15. This was emphatically not true of female slaves, who were employed chiefly as domestic servants, and there is abundant evidence that they were raped, beaten and even murdered by their owners (Bolland 1988; Shoman 1994).
16. The slave register of 1834 lists 117 women as cooks, three as bakers and eleven as "plantation workers" (Shoman 1994: 41). Carib Indian immigrants (a group today called the Garifuna) became very active selling produce and fish in the Belize City market by about 1800, and by the middle of the century the colony would have starved without them (e.g., Duval 1879).
17. Henderson (1811: 66).
18. Dunn (1829: 19).
19. HGCA 1(12), 1/6/1827.
20. HGCA 1(2), 9/16/1826.
21. On the rise of Creole identity see Judd (1989), Medina (1997a), Shoman (1984), Hyde (1989), Johnson (2003).
22. "Historical Sketches of Honduras" in HGCA 1(15), 10/7/1826.
23. Stephens (1841: 12–13).
24. Morlan (1897: 16) called Belize a "negroe's paradise" (exactly the same term is used by Winter 1906 and Tisdel 1913) because of the lack of prejudice; for colonial racism see Harris (1860), Fowler (1879), Morris (1883), Swett (1868), Allen (1841), Dunn (1829).
25. Henderson (1811: 32–33).
26. HGCA 1(18), 10/28/1826.
27. The basic work on slave economies is Mintz and Hall (1960); see also the excellent collection edited by Berlin and Morgan (1991).

28. On slaves selling rations, Beckles (1991: 33).
29. Bolland (1988: 50–51).
30. "Sketches of Honduras" in HGCA 1(18), 2/24/1827.
31. BA 45(1), 7/24/1839. Yampa is a species of yam (*Dioscorea trifida*) also called *cush-cush*, popular in the Caribbean but little known elsewhere. It has a fine texture and a sweeter taste than other yams.
32. Berlin and Morgan (1991). Studies of the effects of slavery on Caribbean society in general have usually focused on African survivals, or the blending of European and African. One of the most sophisticated recent treatments is Burton (1997).
33. On the intermingling of food and freedom, see Mintz (1996).
34. The slave women who were concubines of white men may have, in some ways, been treated better, but these relationships were not usually acknowledged, so theirs was not a publicly high rank.
35. Henderson (1811: 66). Osnaburg was a coarse linen cloth originally made in northern Germany; sometimes slaves were given sewn clothes, but most were issued seven yards of cloth to make their own.
36. Manuscript in Bancroft Library, May 10, 1787, "Supplies bought by Col. Despard as part of his effort to survey the area of the settlement."
37. HGCA 1(7), 9/16/1826.
38. Gann (1925: 26–27).
39. Gann (1925: 118). The Angelus (June 1894) also has an account of a first log party. "Currasow is a wild turkey-like bird. Pan dulce is a Mexican style sweet bread.
40. The barrel had a standard volume of 44 gallons; a hogshead contained 66, and a puncheon 88. The constant volume meant that barrels had different weights, depending on the density of the contents. A barrel of flour generally contained 196 lbs, while pork and beef were reckoned at 208. There were many other sizes and types of containers, including firkins (wooden buckets), trammels (wicker baskets) and pipes (140-gallon barrels of wine or port). The best source on wooden containers is http://home.clara.net/rabarker/Barrels.htm, also McCusker (1997: 70–75).
41. Johannsen (2000).
42. Damper recipes at http://www.australianoutdoors.com/index.htm.
43. Wilk and Hintlian (2004).
44. Diets based on those rations are now a source of health problems for their descendants; Hill (1997).
45. *Honduras Almanac* 1828: 34.
46. Drayton (2002) gives a thorough account of the way markets in Africa and the Caribbean drove the industrial and agricultural development of England and the North American colonies, also see O'Rourke and Williamson (1999).

47. Madison (1986: 74–80) discusses this trade. Indianapolis, Louisville and other cities along the river had their start as centers for meat packing, a role captured by Chicago when railroads became dominant. See also Lillard (1947: 19, 89) and Towne and Wentworth (1950).
48. Besides rum, fish, salt pork and flour, New England also exported wood products like ship's masts, shingles and barrel staves.
49. BA 1(48), 9/14/1839 includes a long debate about Bay-English or Creole, asking if it is a real language that can be written. It is compared to Scottish – which is said to be just as different from standard English. There are opinions both for and against writing in the language, a debate which still continues.
50. HGCA 1(32), 2/3/1827 has a letter of complaint about the slaves dancing in "Ibo town."
51. See Bolland (1988: 27–43) and Linebaugh and Rediker (2000).
52. Gibbs (1883: 52), also cited in Bolland (1988: 54).
53. Belize is indeed fortunate to have such a thorough and talented historian as Nigel Bolland. His command of primary sources is apparent to anyone working with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century history of the area. Here I draw on his 1988 book, Chapter 4.
54. Adapted from Grossman and Thomas (1997: 105–106).

5 The Taste of Colonialism

1. Food scholars are beginning to find some answers to these questions, for example, the papers in Belasco and Scranton (2002) and Watson and Caldwell (2005), also Caldwell (2002), Mintz (1996) and Sutton (2001).
2. On the Miskito see Hale (1994), Naylor (1989) and Nietschmann (1973).
3. The fascinating history of the Garifuna (also called Garinagu) is told by Cayetano (1997) and González (1988) among others.
4. Reed (2001) and Rugeley (2001) on the Caste War.
5. Wilk and Chapin (1990), Wilk (1999b), Medina (1998).
6. These villages, however, were repeatedly pushed off their land and forced into low-paid labor on expanding sugar plantations (Cal 1991).
7. *The Colonial Guardian* newspaper said "The San Antonio Toledo Indians are industrious labourers, willing to work for small amounts, and supply hogs, corn, black beans, plantains and other commodities to our market" (CG Sept 15, 1894). The Maya started growing sugar for their own use and local trade because Indians preferred the brown half-processed sugar over more expensive refined white sugar. Once they had proven that sugar would grow in the northern districts, capitalists stepped in and took over the industry, but their brown sugar was exported to England and refined, then reimported as white sugar, which the rich preferred.

8. Meillasoux (1981) originally made this argument for African peasants, and de Janvry (1981) for Latin America.
9. Colonial racism had some positive advantages for the African-descended workers. Because of the widespread belief that Maya men were weak and suited only to farming, the two labor markets remained separate, and wages remained higher in mahogany work.
10. Well before the chicle boom, North American colonists had adopted chewing from Native Americans who chewed spruce gum, flavored waxes and other tree gums. Gums like mastic were also chewed in the ancient Middle East. See Hendrickson (1976) on chewing and Schwartz (1990) on the chicle industry.
11. Morris (1883: 117). The colonial system of racial and ethnic classification has been studied a great deal lately. Long ago I discussed the way racial classification worked in colonial Belize (Wilk 1985, 1986). Excellent recent work on race and labor in Belize includes Stone (1994), Moberg (1997), Medina (1988, 1997a, 1997b, 2004) and Bolland (1997: 259–313). Johnson (2003) points out the way gender and class were submerged in racial discourse.
12. Fowler (1879: 50).
13. NEBHC 1(29), 7/22/1871. Planters complained that when Creoles went off for well-paid work in Panama or on railways elsewhere in Latin America (where they were considered excellent workers) they came back "brimful of impertinence, rude and unbearable, with a dozen vices added to his original one of laziness, and only useful, like Mark Twain's Indian, as the leading subject for a funeral procession" BABHG 1(6), 4/2/1887.
14. I use the term "race" here only because it was used by the British authorities; modern anthropology rejects the term as having no scientific value. Duval (1879: 58) says the Maya-Mestizo workers "receive twenty-five cents a day and rations, or $5 a month and rations, which consist of about half pound of pork and seven plantains, or an equivalent of corn, a day; while the Africans, or Creoles as they are called, get $8 or $9 a month, and require flour for a part of their rations." A later writer gives a ration for East Indian workers that includes rice, lentils or split peas and curry powder.
15. Almost all nineteenth- and early twentieth-century accounts of Belize list these occupational specializations and discuss the "personality" of each race. The Garifuna were said to be "lazy" and matriarchal, Creoles "cheerful" but argumentative and the Maya quiet, withdrawn and unable to feel pain the same way as white people (e.g., Morris 1883 and Gann 1918). These attitudes persisted well into the late twentieth century (Swan 1957) and some of them linger today.
16. During the banana boom of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the southern coast became the most prosperous and busy part of the colony, and large mixed settlements formed at Monkey River, All Pines, Mullins

River and Stann Creek. When the banana trade collapsed in the late 1920s, these towns declined, leaving only Stann Creek (now Dangriga) as a substantial town. On Garifuna food see Palacio (1982, 1984a, 1984b) and websites listed in the bibliography.

17. Premdas (2002) reports being told that the first East Indians were soldiers deported after the Indian Mutiny in 1858, followed by additional migrant indentured workers in the 1870s. Also Jex (1978) on East Indians in Belize.
18. D. C. Simmonds (2001) on Confederates, also Duval (1879) and Swett (1868). Aaron Burr had a scheme to settle American slaves in Belize, which came to nothing (Coryell 1997).
19. I have oversimplified a complex ethnic history here; to a large extent the category of Creole remains contested and flexible, as ably documented by Judd (1989). General ethnic history is discussed recently by Robinson (1988), Hyde (1989), Wilk and Chapin (1990), Medina (1997a), Sutherland (1998), Moberg (1997) and Woods *et al*. (1997) among others.
20. I use the language names recommended by the Academy of Mayan Languages in Guatemala. There are many variants; Q'eqchi' is often spelled Ketchi or Kekchi in Belize.
21. For ethnographic work on the Maya-Mestizo of northern Belize see Abrams (1973), Birdwell-Pheasant (1984), Stavrakis (1979) and Higgins (1998); the best historical work is by Cal (1991), and a quick contemporary summary of some historical issues is online at http://www.simplybelize.org/episode01.html.
22. Because Belize was such a small and relatively poor colony, it was never able to import an entire European set of social distinctions based on wealth and culture, as happened in other major New World colonial cities at this time, for instance, in Rio de Janeiro (Needell 1987). While places as diverse as Iquitos and Bisbee Arizona were building fine opera houses and thinking of universities and museums, the best that Belize could manage was a weekly tea party or ice-cream social, and an occasional visiting circus or piano soloist.
23. Miller (1994); on reputation and respectability see Austin (1983), Besson (1993) and originally Wilson (1973). The best single description of the cultural politics of respectability in the Caribbean is in Olwig (1993a).
24. Wilk (1994, 2002).
25. Burke (1996).
26. On "embodiment" and colonialism see Comaroff (1985), Burke (1996), Duncan (2002) and Anderson (1995) among many others. The derisory use of the term "eating bush" is first printed in BA 1(25), 1/12/1889 though it was undoubtedly already common speech.
27. Gibbs (1883: 171)
28. BA 2(67), 1/4/1840. "Congo" meant African dancing, and the "John Canoe"

was a widespread Caribbean costumed Christmas dance, a kind of moveable party. On oral performance in Caribbean culture see Abrahams (1983), and for folk performance as resistance to colonial culture Burton (1997).

29. CG 9(49), 12/9/1890.
30. See Wilson (1973) and Chevannes (2001) on Caribbean masculinity.
31. Abrahams 1983; Olwig (1993a: 100–109, 126–135).
32. Newspapers from the 1880s through the 1940s include many announcements and reports of these events. See Macpherson (2003) on race and culture of the historical Belize middle class, and Ashdown (1981) on the elite.
33. The dominance of salt fish (mostly produced by Garifuna fisherfolk) and plantain in the diet is attested by many witnesses. The editor of the *Belize Advertiser* exclaimed, "Saltfish and Plantains! Well, there are diets very much inferior to saltfish and plantains, and no country that possesses a supply of such wholesome nutritious food need be despised by flippant correspondents … As for plantains, they are to the native of the tropics what potatos [*sic*] are for the Irishmen or oatmeal to the Scotchmen. Their wholesome and nutritive properties, their abundance and the simple means required to prepare them make them a blessing to the poorer classes amongst us, and an acceptable addition to the tables of the better circumstanced" BA 1(26), 11/12/1881. Strangely, by the late twentieth century, most Belizeans had no memory or tradition that salt fish and plantain was once the staple food.
34. I read microfilmed newspapers in the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley and the Belize Archives; both collections start in 1826; there are scattered issues from the 1830s and 1840s, none from the 1850s, and then a fairly continuous run from the 1860s onward. I know of no surviving collections which fill in the gaps.
35. Originally a firkin was half a kilderkin, a quarter of a barrel, therefore containing 11 gall. or about 90 lbs. By the middle of the nineteenth century it just referred to a small wooden cask, often for butter.
36. From the 1870s onward England was a massive importer of food, mostly in the form of grain. As Davis (2001) documents, this was a period of free trade liberalization that led to unprecedented famine. Grain was exported in huge quantities from India and other colonies in response to market forces, even as millions died in those areas. While Indians starved, the country also continued to import processed food delicacies from Europe.
37. Foster (1987) is the only history of Belize City.
38. BHCBA 2(69), 11/7/1868 has an ad from a local mill offering among other things "Mahogany shingles – machine made and as durable as the 'Gospel Oak.'" The business appears to have failed within a year.
39. James (1923) is a guide to British Honduras produced by the US government for American traveling salesmen and commercial agents.

40. Geographers call this a dendritic market system, where goods flow only up or down between larger and smaller market centers, but not between towns or villages of the same size (Smith 1976). Lacking internal roads, all trade went up and down the coast and rivers to and from Belize City, rather than connecting the district towns to each other.
41. The British Honduras Blue Books give import figures, the costs of common goods and the standard monthly and daily rates of pay for skilled and unskilled workers, beginning in 1880. The value of the BH Dollar went down gradually, with a major devaluation in the early 1880s. The rest of these figures were gathered in several months of work in the Belize Archives trade statistics.
42. Roberts (1965: 272) gives one example; other contemporary documents about the north coast of Honduras show that there was a lively trade of food, including large numbers of horses and cattle, to Belize.
43. For Belize land-policy history see Bolland and Shoman (1977). At the end of the nineteenth century a single company owned more than half the private land in the colony! The unwillingness of large landowners to sell small parcels to those who wanted to farm was a constant problem.
44. For a beginning of such research, Renne (1993).
45. CG 1(1), 1/7/1882.
46. This is an example of the "allure of the foreign" discussed in Orlove and Bauer (1997) and more generally by Helms (1988).
47. *Colonist* 1(22), 6/2/1866.
48. *Colonist* 1(21), 5/26/1866.
49. BA 3(11), 9/1/1883.
50. TA August 1897.
51. CG 4(14), 3/16/1895, CG 4(18), 4/13/1895 and BA 1(1), 7/28/1888.
52. Branding as a guarantee of quality began at least as early as the tenth century in China (Hamilton and Lai 1989). In England, adulteration led Quaker John Horniman to begin selling tea in sealed packets in 1826 (Rappaport 2004). At this point the individual packager, rather than the producer, became the guarantor of quality. A rusk is a slice of sweet bread, baked a second time till crisp. R. S. Murray was a London manufacturer of confectionaries.
53. Trentmann (2001) explains the close relationship between "food scares" and political changes in the nature of citizenship in developed countries in the nineteenth century. In the colonies, sanitation and adulteration were more closely linked to "scientific" issues of race and the fear of contagious diseases emanating from the poor and "primitive" classes (Anderson 1995).
54. BA 1(28), 2/9/1889. Food adulteration in Victorian times is summarized graphically by Freeman (1989: 24–29). Spoiled and impure foods driven out of Europe and the USA were (and still are) dumped on foreign markets that were unregulated.

55. "Panades" (empanadas) are fried corn dough filled with flaked shark or freshwater catfish. "Dukunu" is a word of African origin (Akan, spoken today in Ghana) for steamed green corn tamales. Along with tamales and small meat or coconut pies, these are common street foods in Belize.
56. Sanborn (1886: 21–24).
57. BA 1(4), 8/18/1888.
58. CG 9(2), 1/11/1890; TCA 2/14/1896.
59. TC 18(529), 7/4/1907.
60. CG 19(30), 7/28/1900.
61. TA January, 1895.
62. TC 27(766), 2/22/1912. A Punkah Lamp was a kerosene lamp with a glass globe surmounted by a circle of metal ornament.
63. TC 8(273), 5/15/1902. The entire poem, and other examples of bad colonial poetry, are in Wilk (1990).

6 Global Ingredients and Local Products

1. Sources for all figures are annual Belize government trade reports from the Archives of Belize.
2. Belize Hospital Auxiliary cookbook (n.d.); these proportions reflect the perception in the 1970s. Today the proportions of Creoles to Mestizos are reversed, as immigration has made Belize more Hispanic.
3. Goody (1982).
4. I am oversimplifying complex cultural theory; here I am basing my distinction mainly on the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1977).
5. The classic examples of this topic could be Ohnuki-Tierney (1992), and Douglas' famous essay on deciphering the deep structure of a meal (1971). Sutton (2001) is a more recent, sophisticated work on the interrelationship between food, the senses and memory, which also deals carefully with the way food can be both taken for granted and brought into conscious memory for discussion and debate (also Seremetakis 1994).
6. Appadurai (1988) on cookbooks and localization is an early example. Leitch (2000) gives a more recent example of how a local food can focus resistance. See also Narayan's interesting chapter on "curry and colonialism" in India (1997).
7. These distinctions are similar to those drawn by Mintz (1996: 20–24) between "inside" and "outside" meanings of food.
8. Latour (1993)
9. Ironically, the concept of an opposition between local and global is itself one of the most globalized feral ideas, as recently argued by Holtzman (2004), and also in Wilk (1993a, 1993b, 1994).

10. One could digress here into anthropological debates about subjectivity, intersubjectivity and objectivity; suffice to say that there are many who believe that there is no distinction between folk and analytical concepts, that all we have to offer as anthropologists is another set of folk concepts.
11. Pilcher (1998).
12. In much of this discussion of creolization I have drawn on the useful critical summary by Sheller (2003: 174–196).
13. See Williams on multiethnic Guyana (1991), and Eriksen's (1998) comparison of Trinidad and Mauritius. Patterson developed an analytical distinction between synthetic creolization, producing a unified national culture and segmentary creolization, in which multiple creole cultures emerge (1975). On this scale, Belize has to land somewhere in between. Belize may be too small for Burton's (1997) distinction of different kinds or levels of creolization.
14. The globalization theorists are exemplified by Hannerz (1990, 1996), Appadurai (1996) and Sassen (1998). Sheller (2003) believes that the global theorists have essentially "hijacked" and appropriated the Caribbean use of the term, but Caribbeans were not the only early users of the concept, which along with cognates like Mestizaje, cropped up in postcolonial times in many other parts of the world.
15. Bolland (1992: 72). The foundation for this more complex idea of creolization can be found in Mintz and Price (1992), and more recently Burton (1997).
16. Clarke (1999: 65).
17. Leas (1863). This conflict between cook and employer, common in the colonial world, is discussed by Hansen (1997), and contextualized by Stoler (2002).
18. Morlan (1897: 20).
19. Arvigo (1994) has a good summary of at least one, Mayan-influenced rural healing tradition. The working-class and rural Creole tradition of curing depends more on herbs than food avoidance, and focuses on strengthening "blood" and resistance to witchcraft.
20. Leas (1863).
21. CG 1(47), 11/25/1882.
22. BI 6(12), 11/1/1894. Physic probably means a purge or cathartic using medicines.
23. BA 1(23), 10/ 22/1881.
24. Gibbs (1883: 171).
25. Hamman (1998: 206).
26. Similar food metaphors for cultural mixing are discussed and debated by Munasinghe (2001).
27. These are obviously large and complex issues, which I am simplifying here.

Comaroff and Comaroff (1992) give the best sustained illustration of how colonial cultural contact can be understood using a sophisticated idea of culture. For "Idols behind Altars" see Brenner (1929); when you think of culture as a stream of dense liquid or other substance, it leads into sterile debates about how much continuity there is with the past, and how much the flow of culture has been disrupted, or dammed by invasion and conquest. On the politics of cultural borrowing, see Wilk (2004).

28. I am using more fluid and substance metaphors here. Some of the clearest arguments about the politics of cultural contact were made long ago by Salisbury (1962). Scholars working in Japan have long debated the seeming ability of Japanese culture to absorb foreign influence, while remaining Japanese (Tobin (1992).
29. See Goode, Theophano and Curtis (1982) and Douglas (1971).
30. See Chasteen (2004) for an example of how styles of music have been blended and mixed over time.
31. In the Caribbean coconut *water* is the liquid from the center of the coconut seed, while coconut *milk* is prepared by soaking shredded coconut meat in warm water, then squeezing the meat to express a thick white liquid containing coconut oil. Pure coconut *oil* comes from boiling coconut meat, and skimming off the oil that floats to the surface. Oil from the smaller *cohune* palm nuts is sometimes substituted in Belize.
32. Heydorn (1998) on salt fish. As leaner meats have become preferred in rich countries, the cheap fattier cuts are being increasingly exported frozen or fresh to developing countries. In Ghana I have seen frozen turkey tails from the US in markets, and then cooked they are a popular street food. The rich keep the lean protein, but send unhealthy fats and gristle off to the less fortunate.
33. *Kriol* refers to the Belizean creole language, in a new orthography, while *Creole* refers to the culture and ethnic group. One other Yucatecan recado mixture is common in Belize – the black mixture called *chilmole*, Kriol *chimoaleh*. The main ingredient in this paste is black burned tortillas, which give a distinctive black coloring to two common dishes, black *relleno* and *chilmole*.
34. The Oxo company, now part of Unilever, has an online corporate history at http://www.oxo.co.uk/history/.
35. The main ingredient in bouillon cubes is plain salt, something most Belizeans hardly need added to their diet. They are a good early example of a packaged convenience food that offered flavor without nutritional benefit.
36. Callaloo in Belize is the species *Amaranthus viridis*, which is known elsewhere in the Caribbean by the interesting names "Chinese spinach" and "Indian kale." Another common green in Belize is *chaya* (*Cnidoscolus*

chayamansa), which was originally a Maya crop and is still preferred over *callaloo* by most Hispanic Belizeans. In the eastern Caribbean *dasheen* (eddo, taro, *Colocasia esculenta*) leaves are called Callaloo. They are rarely used in Belize, and then usually by rural people. Most local greens are treated with suspicion by city people who see them as "bushy." Imported frozen or canned spinach is now more common.

37. This is not the true yellow-flowered ginger, but is instead closely related turmeric (*Curcuma longa*). It is grown widely in Belize, dried and made into a powder for kitchen use.
38. Thickened corn drinks are part of the cuisine of all Maya-speaking peoples, and other Mesoamericans. The Kekchi in southern Belize have many kinds, including those made from green corn, toasted corn and corn with ground cacao beans and black pepper. Once I was even served a corn lab flavored with lime Kool-aid.
39. Cultivated banana, plantain and wild banana leaves are used as food wrappers and can be bought in urban markets; *waha* leaves are used mostly by rural people; some sources identify waha as *Calathea insignis*, but I believe I have seen other Calathea species, and some *Heliconias* called waha.
40. Tinker (1997) on street foods. Almost all the neo-Belizean dishes created by visiting chefs involve some kind of stuffing or wrapping.
41. The literary term for this is synecdoche. See Wu and Cheung (2002) for examples of how Chinese food was simplified as it moved around the world.
42. The history of Hispanic ethnicity in Belize is much more complex than I can cover here, since there have been so many waves of migration from different places.
43. Like turtle eggs, conch still carries a clear association with virility and has a reputation as an aphrodisiac and recuperative. Cowfoot soup has a reputation as a cure for hangover, just like the tripe- and offal-based *menudos* of Mexico.
44. Andrae and Beckman (1985).
45. Belizeans do not generally eat the more ancient British holiday dish of boiled Christmas pudding. See Miller (1995) more generally on Christmas as a consumption holiday in the Caribbean and elsewhere.
46. My 1990 survey of over 1,100 Belize City teenagers showed that rice and beans was the favorite food of *all* ethnic groups, even recent Chinese immigrants. It has therefore passed from being an ethnic food to a national dish.
47. The same kind of promotion happened with chicken in Australia as it became cheaper (Dixon 2002). Bahloul (1995) argues that religion and ritual often maintain the division between holiday and everyday food; see also Mosley (2005) on Senegal.
48. Good recent work on cultural transmission includes Urban and Lee (2001) and Toren (1999).

49. Some archeologists have now recognized just how much work goes into making pottery and other artifacts remain the same over time, and have discussed political and social reasons why it can be important to keep things from changing (Pyburn 1994).
50. See Frykman and Löfgren (1987) for an illuminating picture of the way the Victorian-period Swedish middle class distanced themselves from both nobility and working classes through their particular notions of moral consumption.
51. Parrot-tongue pie is mentioned in an article in *The Colonist*, 1(2) January 13, 1866. For snipe hunting, see Rogers (1885: 218). Common snipe (*Gallinago delicata*) are rare in Belize today, perhaps because of nineteenth-century hunters like Rogers.
52. Hicatee and rice is a special dish prepared by rural Creoles for Easter. Like the best fruits, and less commercial fish and game products, freshwater turtles are very rare in the markets, and you have to know someone to get them through a private network. Freshwater fish are a particularly interesting item in Belize: while the nearby Caribbean provides an abundant supply of saltwater fish, most Belizeans prefer freshwater fish and are willing to pay more for it. There are many delicate tropical fruits in Belize that are available for very short periods in the year, and do not travel or store well in the heat. To get the rarer ones you have to know someone with a tree or bush, and sometimes you have to go and pick them yourself. Mangos in Belize come in many varieties, but only common kinds are found in the market. A friend once drove me halfway across the country to buy mangos from one particular tree, and after tasting one I had to admit it was worth the trouble!
53. Mintz (1979, 1985).
54. Van Esterik (n.d.).
55. TC 15(453),1/11/1906.
56. In a perceptive paper based on a cross-cultural survey of diet, Jenkins (1982) shows that in the 1980s many foods and dishes were already shared by all the ethnic groups in Belize.
57. *Darasa* is like a pork tamale made with green bananas or plantains instead of cornmeal, wrapped in banana leaf. *Relleno* is pork-stuffed chicken, stewed with either a white or black sauce.
58. Mopan and Kekchi cooks have to be excluded from this argument about common cooking techniques and methods. Outside of urban areas, Mopan and Kekchi cooking has not been very creolized.
59. It is debatable to what degree rural people, and especially the Garinagu, shared this set of values. My impression is that many Garinagu in rural areas have always maintained a pride in their ancestral foods that counters the high status of imports.

60. This recipe is adapted from one offered at http://belize.centramerica.com/recetas/level1a.asp?Id=474, and a fish tacari recipe in Godfrey (n.d.).

7 Food Politics and the Making of a Nation

1. Sir George Arthur's career is the best-documented, but he was unusually successful (Shaw 1980).
2. Ferguson (1996) thinks the whole apparatus of foreign aid and agricultural assistance systematically obscures political divisions, power and inequality using a technocratic vocabulary.
3. The first rice project I found dates to 1900 when the governor levied a 12.5 percent duty on rice and Indian corn (CG 19(31), 8/4/1900). The newspaper pointed out that a land tax on large proprietors would be a better way to raise revenue, and that the duty hurt the urban working class who had to pay more for rice. "The encouragement of rice culture, here, by such a duty is hopeless. Even if there were rice-cleaning machinery established in the colony – which does not, here, exist – our cultivators could never compete with the rice grown in India. The cheapest labour that can be got, here, costs not less than 25c a day for each labourer; whereas the Indian labourer does not receive in India for such labour, more than 8c a day …" Ashcraft (1973b) is the best writer on the historical underdevelopment of agriculture in Belize.
4. The relevant project documents are unpublished; some of these farmers now sell their cocoa to a British company that sells organic chocolate (Fairtrade 2004).
5. Romney (1959).
6. James (1923: 6).
7. BA 1(24), 10/29/1881.
8. BA 1(25), 1/12/1889.
9. Henderson (1811: 42). This is also noted by Johnson (2003).
10. BA 1(36), 4/6/1889.
11. Bolland (1988: 162) and contemporary newspapers.
12. CG 18(17), 4/29/1899 and following issues until June. Editorials point out how ridiculous the governor's suggestions were, and how he insulted the delegation. These men were brave to go to the governor at all, since the leaders of other groups had ended up in prison. See Ashdown (1979) on other labor disturbances of the time.
13. *Honduras Almanac* (1829: 14).
14. Burns (1949: 128) writing about his experience as governor in 1934.
15. TC 15(451), 1/18/1906. Dunn (1829: 11) on laziness.
16. James (1923: 6).
17. TC 27 (795), 6/13/1912. The editorial continues, "The farmer is PAR

EXCELLENCE, the Empire Builder, Without him the United States, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa … would be still 'waste, howling wilderness, fit habitation for wild beasts to dwell in.' He is the true developer, the backbone and mainstay of a country; especially of an undeveloped one such as this is. When we shall have a government that recognizes these facts, and makes provision for an extensive teaching of agricultural methods, we shall be started on the road that leads to success."

18. TC 15(451), 3/15/1906.
19. From my experience in rural Belize, it would be more appropriate to talk about the Creole *love* of farming! Many rural Creole people work hard in Belize City, Chicago or Miami for years to get enough money to buy a farm at home.
20. Bolland and Shoman (1977) on land in Belize. In 1907 the tax rate went up to BH$ 0.50 per acre (Ashcraft 1973b: 48).
21. Stanley Woods, editor of *The Clarion* in the early 1900s, was a tireless booster for local agriculture, as was Frederick Gahne, editor of the *Colonial Guardian* in the late nineteenth century. More varied ideas about the problems of agriculture in Belize are in letters written by farmer G. W. Brookes to the *Daily Clarion* in the 1930s and 1940s. Land tenure problems are discussed by Morris (1883); BI 5(42), 5/31/1894; Fowler (1879: 48); CG 18(21), 5/27/1899; the report of the 1917 Agricultural Commission in TC 37(6), 6/29/1917; the Commission of the Secretary of State for the Colonies (1934); the report of the Commission on Nutrition (1937) and Dumont (1963). The land tax was so regressive that in 1899 a person with 640 acres paid the same tax as one with ten (CG 18(15), 4/15/1899).
22. In 1868 the Legislative Assembly passed a bill to encourage agriculture – making it possible to sell Crown land at auction, paying for a survey of the country and setting aside Crown lands for Carib and Indian villages (BHCBA 1(43), 5/9/1868).
23. Riverbanks, which are the most fertile areas, are constantly shifting and moving during annual floods. Forests are even harder to control; huge amounts of valuable timber are stolen from public and private land. I have watched villagers cut hundreds of pine trees from land owned by absentee Americans. The general attitude is that if you are not there to watch over your property, "more fool you."
24. For a list of these and other explanations, see the Commission of the Secretary of State for the Colonies (1934: 25). People agitated for better roads and transportation for many years, but the government was extremely stingy with funds.
25. CG 10(22), 5/30/1891; CG 29(5), 1/29/1910; on the first attempt at an agricultural exposition, see BHCBA 1(9), 9/14/1867. The government did not actually establish an agriculture department until 1928.

26. Midwest Universities Consortium for International Activities (1988).
27. BB 7/27/1946; a comparison with prewar opinion on the same topic is very interesting. In a column "Hit or Miss" in the *Daily Clarion* just as the war started in 1939, E. A. Laing blames all agricultural problems on lack of land, the laziness of workers and poor infrastructure, without any hint of politics (DC 9/30/1939).
28. Moberg (1997) gives a history of the banana business. As the fruit business became more concentrated and the market was controlled by Standard Fruit and United Fruit, small farmers were driven out. Plant diseases were also a problem. The banana boom was over by the 1930s, and the south coast became a backwater.
29. Ashcraft (1973b) details the history of Creole farming along the Sibun and Belize Rivers. For a good summary of agricultural development in Belize see Perry and Woods (1991) and Moberg (1992).
30. Ashcraft (1973b) and Reuss (1966) on food marketing in Belize.
31. One of the more eloquent statements of the farmer's point of view is in TC 1(4), 1/27/1866. I have spent a lot of time talking with Belizean farmers, and I continue to find it remarkable how rarely the experts actually hear what the farmers have to say. Despite obstacles, small farmers persisted in Belize, bringing their eggs and poultry, fruits and vegetables in canoes and carts to the city markets, hawking them door-to-door and on street corners. But their returns were pitifully low, and few made their whole living at it.
32. Extending the harvest season would make more sense to most farmers than increasing their yields, but this has rarely been the focus of research. Some agricultural reports do note the problem of a small easily glutted market, but then move on to make recommendations to increase production anyway (Jones 1953; Dumont 1963; Reuss 1966; Tripartite Report 1966).
33. Food was a strategic issue for all the great powers. Britain always considered itself vulnerable because it could not feed itself, which is why it had to become the world's great naval power.
34. We now know that this was a subsidy from nature. Native American farming and subsistence had maintained the quality and fertility of soils. Settlers drew on this "bank" of fertility in the first years of farming; and when the soil was exhausted they often moved on looking for fresh areas on the expanding frontier.
35. See Lappé (1980) for a cogent critique of food aid. This is not to say that famine relief is always harmful; when people are starving they need aid.
36. Goodman and Watts (1997) and Madeley (2000) are good basic references on food trade and subsidies.
37. For the technocratic approach see Rosegrant and Cline (2003) and a general discussion of food and science see Nestle (2003).

38. See Sen (1981); Ravallion (1987).
39. Ferguson (1996) is relevant here. I am always amazed that visitors feel like they can come to Belize and in a few weeks solve problems that Belizeans have been confronting for hundreds of years. Once when I was on a USAID funded agriculture project, I was enjoying an after-hours beer with one of our Belizean agricultural officer "counterparts" who I had known for years. Eventually he asked "Why don't they see that if there was a way to make money farming in Belize, we would have found it by now?"
40. In the early 1900s Belize became so dependent on bananas that a local wag wrote "We are now a dependency of the United Fruit Company. Haul down the old flag from the flagstaffs at Government House and the Courthouse; and with military honours hoist the ensign of the omnipotent syndicate" (TC 24(705), 11/16/1910). At various times people have tried pineapples, palm oils, achiote, cashew, melons, okra and other winter vegetables, all without sustained success. Lobster and conch fisheries have been successful, only because the global market demand for these items outstrips supply, so prices are high and Belize can easily compete with poorer countries.
41. At just this time the US and other countries were trying to protect their own consumers from pesticide residues on imported crops. Only the largest and richest farmers in a place like Belize could afford the testing and certification required to sell their products abroad. The consumer's legitimate fear about pesticides on their mango bankrupts thousands of small farmers in developing countries, so they end up as farm workers on land they once owned.
42. There have been a few successes with specialty crops and foods that enter the "gourmet" and "fair" trade systems. Marie Sharp's hot sauce is probably the best-known, but Belize also exports organic cocoa, "wild jungle" honey, shade plants for offices, exotic tropical fish, butterflies, wicker furniture and a few other goods that have small niche markets.
43. See Medina (2004) and Moberg (1992, 1997) on labor in Belize agriculture. During the 1980s the Reagan administration made it clear that countries that did not go along with its belligerent foreign policy in Central America and the Caribbean would have their sugar quotas cut. Under pressure from the Chiquita company, which produces the cheapest bananas in the world market, the USA has pursued a case in the WTO against Europe, and is forcing them to drop their protection of Belizean and other Caribbean bananas, a move that will surely kill the industry in Belize. At the same time, the US has done nothing to change its own subsidy of sugar producers in Florida and Louisiana, which costs US taxpayers and consumers billions each year, and keeps many farmers in small countries out of the USA sugar market. "Free trade" is anything but fair.
44. Griffiths (2003) gives a sensible, economist's perspective on subsidies and agricultural trade policy in a country very much like Belize.

45. TC 32(909), 10/7/1914, and 32(913), 11/5/1914. During the war *The Clarion*, ran a constant stream of headlines and editorials on the theme "now is the time for education and improvement in the field of agriculture."
46. TC 37(13), 3/29/1917.
47. On the origins of the marketing board Cheverton and Smart (1937), Ashcraft (1973b: 87) and Wilk (1991b).
48. The marketing system also provided opportunities for minor corruption, which helped encourage a whole system of black-market crime (Wiegand 1994).
49. Wilk (1991b: 125–127) on the modern rice economy.
50. TRDP (1986); Harrison (2004).
51. Belize Development Trust (2003).
52. The usual round of commissions and expert teams gave the usual advice about increasing food production in the country, starting a regional "Grow More Food" campaign in the face of a global shortage of many items (e.g., TC 77(441), 9/7/1939; TC 77(483), 10/19/1939). Though prices went up, shortages of foods were temporary and there was no widespread hunger because of the war. Government did use the Second World War as an opportunity to take complete control of the market, regulating imports, prices and profits.
53. "Marmalade – At last, marmalade made in our own Colony. Try this excellent citrus marmalade made at Sean Hill Farm in Stann Creek Valley" (TC 89(71), 3/26/1941).
54. Johnson (2003) discusses the Second World War work program in the US; the *Daily Clarion* reported 1,204 Belizeans working legally in the US, and a larger number in both the US and English Armies (TC 83(147), 7/16/1945). Setzekorn (1981: 211) counts more than 1,000 in the Canal Zone, and 843 forestry workers in Scotland, and there were several thousand in the military. This was a huge proportion of the very small population.
55. Belize today has the highest per capita food import bill of any country in mainland Latin America, rivaling some of the richer Caribbean countries. An FAO survey in 1964 found that 52.7 per cent of the average household food budget was spent on imports (Reuss 1966). The 1980 household survey showed that from an average annual household budget of US$4,386, a minimum of 43 per cent was spent directly on imported products (Fairclough n.d.; Wilk 1991a). If we include imported products that are processed and packaged in Belize, and imported fuels, this figure rises above 65 percent. Most of these budgets fail to account, however, for the large amount of food Belizeans grow for their own consumption in gardens and subsistence farms. A 1992 study suggests, somewhat optimistically, that this kind of production accounts for more than half the food eaten in Belize (Belize Food, Nutrition and Health Assessment 1992).
56. The US government helps Americans to set up businesses in places like

Belize, even if those businesses are going to undercut the work of other US government projects. A US government organization provided insurance that made it possible for the Texans to get a cheap commercial loan, at a rate far lower than any Belizean could obtain.

57. In 1990 the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry began the first of many "Buy Belizean" campaigners. Posters and bumper stickers all over the country have been exhorting Belizeans since then to do their patriotic duty and support local products.
58. The cost of imported meat has gone down, so the value of meat imports is lower, even though measured in weight per capita meat imports are holding steady.
59. World Resources Institute (2004).
60. Bushong (1961), Sawatzky (1969), Higdon (1997) on Mennonite migration to Belize. Some Belizeans argue that Mennonite success in Belize is due to their hard work and knowledge of farming. This is important, but many Belizeans work hard too. The Mennonites have organization and financial advantages: their communities provide credit, land and many other services at below-market prices, they use unpaid family labor and the communities buy and manage heavy equipment and grain storage cooperatively. They live frugally, purchase goods cooperatively and have a low cost of living because they don't send their children out of the community for school.
61. Cheap frozen chickens from the US have flooded markets in Africa and parts of Latin America; see Zachary (2004).
62. On the nationalist movement see Setzkorn (1981), Grant (1976), Shoman (1987) and Bolland (1988).
63. The governor repeatedly explained in public speeches and newspaper articles the rationale for import controls, but never found a way to portray them as being good for Belizean consumers (TC 85(264), 11/22/1947; TC 85(272), 12/2/1947; TC 85(274); 12/4/1947).
64. TC 85(266), 11/26/1947.
65. TC 85(274), 12/4/1947.
66. Films, foreign news and even some mail was censored by the colonial government in Belize through to the early 1960s. Belizeans found it very hard to obtain passports or even drivers' licenses. There were limited elections to city councils and a legislature in the 1940s and 1950s but the franchise was restricted in various ways to exclude the majority. The demonstrations are described sympathetically in BB 1/8/1950.
67. Grant (1976: 128–135) sees the attachment to America as an expression of anti-British sentiment, but Price and some of the other nationalist leaders seriously believed that Belize would be economically much better off as part of the American orbit, rather than the British Caribbean. This helps explain why most Belizeans were opposed to joining the proposed Caribbean Confederation a

few years later. Sentiment for closer connection with the USA lingered on for a long time. In the 1980s a small group floated a proposal to ask the USA to annex Belize and make it a state.

68. Full internal self-government with a ministerial system was negotiated in 1964; the name of the colony was officially changed to Belize in 1973, but full independence had to wait until 1981 because of the continuing threat to Belize's borders from Guatemala, which has still not fully accepted Belize's sovereignty. Price's party, the People's United Party, has ruled the country ever since, with two interruptions from the opposition. Price is now considered the "father of the nation": recent works on his life include Castillo (2002) and Green and Galvez (2000).
69. Guayaberas are a pleated-front short-sleeved shirt common in Yucatan.
70. I have not been able to find the original text of the speech, but depend instead on newspaper reports about it.
71. BB 1/5/1964.
72. BB 1/11/1964.
73. This is an example of the recipes copied from foreign magazines that were regularly reprinted in Belize City newspapers from the 1920s right up through the 1960s, which encouraged the use of canned food, even when fresh was locally available. It is ironic that there is no season called "winter" in Belize. The recipe includes a note saying: "made this way a tinned fruit salad taste [*sic*] like one from fresh fruit." From "Recipes and Hints for the Housewife," BI 16(828), 1/15/1930.

8 Migrants, Tourists and the New Belizean Cuisine

1. Ritz (1994: 64).
2. Bradbury (2000: 64).
3. Mahler and Wotkyns (1997: 342).
4. Glassman (1996: 19).
5. Whatmore and Eltringham (1990: 242).
6. Many good food writers and historians have broken away from this kind of storytelling, but the "loss of tradition" theme is still very common, for example, some papers in Lysaght (2004), and is shared with other genres like nature films and studies of crafts.
7. E.g., Rostow (1960); Myrdal (1957); for summary Wilk (1991b).
8. Frank and Weiland (1997).
9. Löfgren (1999) shows the close relationship between the discontents of civilization and the taste for the exotic.
10. Friedman (1990); Appadurai (1996); Wilk (1995c); Hall *et al.* (2003); Long (2003) and useful summary by Kearney (1995).

11. Baudrillard (1998) as well as members of the Frankfurt school.
12. The slow food movement began in Italy, where European Community regulations and the arrival of American fast-food outlets galvanized people interested in preserving local cuisines and products; the movement is described and documented by Petrini (2001). In the USA the renewed interest in local food is reflected in a flood of ethnic and regional cookbooks, and new regional restaurants. Some political food activists find the slow food movement elitist, concerned more with ensuring the survival of gourmet treats than with the chemical and fat-laden diet of the average person, the dangers of BSE or the dominance of large agribusiness corporations. On the other hand, changes in taste among the elite have historically led mass movements in new directions. For critical discussion of slow food, see Pilcher (n.d.), and in a recent issue of *Food, Culture and Society* Labelle (2005), Gaytán (2005), Chrzan (2005) and Laudan (2005).
13. Mosley (2005) contends that French food was still resisted in Senegal.
14. Appadurai (1988); Cusack (2000).
15. A *pib* is the Yucateco Maya word for an earth oven. *Pibil* in the countryside really just means anything you cook in the pib, most of which is seasoned and wrapped in plantain, banana or other broad leaves. But in cookbooks *pollo pibil* is regularized into a chicken with red recado and citrus juice, wrapped and baked.
16. Van Esterik (2000); Goody (1998: ch. 8).
17. These types owe a good deal to the work of Friedman (1992, 1994b).
18. Mosley (2005) argues that nontribal urban elites have created new African cuisines to partially replace the French.
19. On mixing see DeVault (1991).
20. Shoman (1987) says that urban Creole culture was imposed on the rest of the country as a quasi-official national culture.
21. Bouvier (1984), Wilk (1985), Topsey (1987), Hyde (1989), and Wilk and Chapin (1990) on ethnic mixture in Belize in the 1980s.
22. Government of Belize (2001).
23. TC 77(525), 12/15/1939.
24. TC 89(20), 1/24/1941; I know of no surviving copy.
25. The orange habanero, the hottest known pepper, was probably brought to Yucatan from Cuba, and it is also common in the eastern Caribbean islands. A 1964 report on Belizean food habits says "Not all Creoles like pepper, but there is usually a jar of pepper sauce (sliced pepper and onions soaked in vinegar) on the table anyhow, and at various times a few drops of this sauce might be sprinkled over the food to give it more flavour" (Vernon 1964: 78).
26. Melinda's started as a home-based business in the mid 1980s, and became an export success from 1989–1991. The Belizean owner never trademarked the

brand name in the US, however, and in 1991 their Belizean-American distributor appropriated the recipe and name, and started making hot sauce under the Melinda's label more cheaply in Costa Rica. The original Belizean sauce is exported today using the name of the company founder, Marie Sharp. In July of 2004 Marie Sharp won a contract with Wal-Mart, which will increase the visibility of Belizean hot sauce in the USA.

27. These refer to Woolworth, Bloomingdales and K-Mart department stores in the USA; Home Depot is a major USA chain of home-improvement stores. Butterball is a major brand of US frozen turkeys, Taco-Bell a fast-food chain and Winsome imitated popular Winston cigarettes.
28. See Shapiro (2004) on canned cuisine in 1950s America.
29. Castillo (2002: 64) mentions the lunches, but does not say if the Belizean ingredients were cooked following Belizean recipes.
30. Interview with Inez Sanchez, 1991.
31. Though well intentioned, REAP was another symptom of the colonial idea that all good ideas and technologies, just like all civilized clothes and foods, come from abroad. In 2004 the government of Belize began a new initiative to promote school gardening, called the "Future Farmers Project," with funding from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, a program that will "hopefully lead to a lifelong commitment to home-gardening and increased self-sufficiency."
32. See Hyde (1971).
33. Carifesta is a regional cultural festival of food, music, dance and art that was held in Jamaica in 1976. Dr Colville Young came back from abroad at about this time and began a long effort to get Belizeans to value the Kriol language and Belizean music. Oswald Sutherland, Meg Craig, Angel Cal and other educated Belizeans played major and largely unsung roles in changing colonialist attitudes that denigrated Belizean culture. Clarke served in many other government posts.
34. Many recent cookbooks and Belizean food websites copy recipes from this book. *Belizeans Favourite Foods using the Food Groups* came out a few years later, and reflects an even stronger nationalist emphasis, including only local recipes from five ethnic groups.
35. They were quickly disappointed. Belizeans did not take to the food, and many thought the restaurant was overpriced. KFC Belize closed in 1981, and there were no other foreign fast-food franchises in the country until a Subway opened in 2003, partially to serve cruise-ship tourists.
36. On the northern border it was possible to get one or two Mexican channels.
37. The quotes are from Ewens (c. 1982) and anonymous (1981). The advent of television in Belize is discussed by Westlake (1982); Barry (1984); Oliveira (1986); Roser *et al*. (1986); Bolland (1987); Everitt (1987); Petch (1987,

1988); Lent (1989); Snyder *et al*. (1991); Wilk (1993a, 1994, 2003).

38. In 1990 Hilary Kahn and I interviewed Belizeans who had lived in the USA and returned voluntarily to Belize.
39. The credibility of Britain's willingness to defend its territories was bolstered by the Falklands War in 1982. Guatemala's claims on Belize have never been settled, despite years of negotiation and the intervention of numerous outside parties. The very idea of giving small territorial concessions to end the conflict led to deadly riots in Belize City in 1981. The British Army kept a small garrison in Belize to defend the border until 1994.
40. Aurora Mendez was born to a very poor "Spanish" family in San Pedro Colombia in southern Belize, the descendant of immigrants from Honduras. She learned to cook for foreigners while working for archeologists, and I was privileged to eat her cooking during five different seasons of fieldwork.
41. On Caribbean migrations, see Simmons and Guengant (1992); Richardson (1989). On the 1990 estimate see Vernon (1990).
42. On Belizean migrants to the US see Babcock and Wilk (1998); England (1999); Babcock and Conway (2000); Babcock (2003).
43. Many Belizeans believe that emigration to the United States has detrimental effects on Belizean culture (Vernon 1990), and migrants do not return with useful skills (L. R. Miller 1993). Return migrants are blamed for increasing consumerism, an infusion of North American cultural values, gang activity, drug use and juvenile crime (Matthei and Smith 1998).
44. Sutton and Chaney (1987); Glick-Schiller and Fouron (2001).
45. Basch *et al.* (1994); Gmelch (1993) and Hall (1990). The experience of Caribbean migrants in Britain has been quite different, since in some sense people were returning to the "home country" (Western 1992). Migrant communities have played key roles in shaping other national cuisines. Gabaccia (2004) and Teti (1992) argue that Italian migrants in the US shaped the "traditional" regional cuisines of the home country.
46. Meat pies and coconut tarts are common Belize City fast foods. Dukunu, as we have seen is a sweet green-corn tamale. Powder and Creole buns are sweetened and spiced breads. Stewed cashew is made from the apple-like fruit, not the nut, and it makes a dark and very sweet preserve. Craboo (*Byrsonima crassifolia*, called *nance* in Mexico) is a seasonal fruit, often sold in jars of water or syrup. Sorrel is the red flower of the hibiscus, made into juice or fermented into wine. *Tableta* is a baked candy made from coconut, ginger and sugar, similar to cottobrute which does not have ginger. *Stretch-mi-guts* is a taffy made with coconut water.
47. Hyde (1971: 60). *Fish tea* is a fish broth, *cubali* is a saltwater fish (jack), *barra* is barracuda, coco here means the tuber cocoyam and *cho-cho* is chayote squash (*cristophene*).

48. On the process of making foreign food work for an American audience, see papers in Hall *et al.* (2003), and Rownlie *et al.* (2005). The general issue of the cuisines in migrant communities is discussed in Wu and Cheung (2002), Sutton (2001) and Charon Cardona (2004). Alexeyeff (2004) discusses the traffic in food between home and migrant communities in the Pacific.
49. Crab soup is made from land crabs, which swarm toward the coast to lay their eggs once a year in huge numbers.
50. Rastafarianism has never been a major movement in Belize, but dreadlocks, reggae and Rasta fashions have been popular. A few real Rastafarians from Jamaica found their way to Belize, and there are a number of Belizeans who became Rastas while living around Jamaican neighborhoods in the USA. It is important to remember that globalization is more than just the spread of culture from rich to poor. The irony is that in Belize most Caribbean culture has to come through the USA. There are no direct flights to other Caribbean countries from Belize.
51. As early as 1975 DeVoe and Mertz found a surprising number of American and British citizens living scattered around the rural areas of the northern part of the country (1976).
52. *Amandala*, February 23, 1990. Jackson (1995) discusses how foreigners can make people more aware of their own ethnicity.
53. Krohn later opened the first nationwide television station, which consistently promotes local arts and culture.
54. On the history of tourist development in the Caribbean see Taylor (2003). In Belize see Sutherland (1986, 1996, 1998), Woods et al. (1992); Higinio and Munt (1993); Munt and Higinio (1993); Lindberg *et al*. (1996); Johnson (1998); Belsky (1999).
55. Woods *et al*. (1992).
56. All tourism figures from the Belize Central Statistical Office; numbers from the Belize Tourist Board (www.belizetourism.org) and the Belize Tourist Industry Association (www.btia.org) tend to be higher.
57. One locally owned San Pedro restaurant, Elvi's Kitchen, has been serving Belizean food for tourists since the mid 1980s with great success. The restaurant began as a hamburger stand, and as it expanded Elvia Staines built a reputation for Belizean food that appeals to foreign palates, mainly by keeping attention on international-style seafood and meat entrees like baked grouper and fried chicken (http://www.belizereport.com/eating/elvis.html).
58. *Pitahaya* is a large cactus fruit (*Cereus iitajaya*), a native of Central America, in both red- and white-fleshed varieties.
59. Because of the colonial legacy, many Belizeans found service jobs demeaning, and customers in restaurants and stores often felt ignored or

abused. This is now fading, as work in tourism becomes more professional and respectable.
60. Vegetarianism is hard for many rural Belizeans to understand, since they are still trying to get enough money to eat meat regularly!
61. On the similar development of local cuisine in Atlantic Panama, see Guerrón-Montero (2005). The Belize Tourism Board also sponsors the best Belize food website at www.belizeanjourneys.com/features/bzefood/newsletter.html.
62. "Taste Belize" DVD from OXA Productions, www.tastebelize.com.
63. Ironically, McNab deviates from traditional Belizean coconut pie by using fresh cream instead of canned sweetened condensed milk, and whole wheat flour instead of white bleached. Canned food is traditional, fresh cream is a wholly modern taste imparted by tourists.
64. This is quoted with permission from "JC" an anonymous respondent to a set of questions that were circulated on the *Belizean Journeys* website.
65. Some of these foreigners are more sensitive than others – in one recent course sponsored by the BTA the teaching chef made a point of using only Belizean-produced ingredients in the dishes he demonstrated.
66. Reviewed online at www.belizereport.com/eating/clarissa.html.
67. Transcript from Channel 5 nightly news, Monday, May 26, 2003.
68. This is an example of the generic tropical food which appears on the *Taste Belize* DVD (www.tastebelize.com).

9 Fast Food or Home Cooking

1. Transcript of speeches at the opening of a regional conference on food security, March 14, 2004, from Channel 5 Belize.
2. Ritzer (1998, 2000).
3. Harvey (1989), also Gupta and Ferguson (1992).
4. McMichael (1994), Berry (1996), Madely (2000), Schlosser (2001), Nabham (2002). Friedmann (1999) is one of the best-informed and most balanced critics.
5. Spurlock (2005) is eloquent on the health dangers of fast food; see also Hill on earlier imported diets (1997).
6. This is very much the question for those in the antiglobalization movement; see Buckman (2004). The extreme position for localization is stated by Hines (2000); also Shuman (1998).
7. Banwell *et al*. (n.d.) on the energy inefficiencies of slow food.
8. Pilcher (n.d.).
9. Tinker (1997).
10. Busch (2004) makes key points about the role of standards in the industrial food system.

11. Bruner (1994).
12. Mintz (n.d.), also (1996).
13. Mintz (n.d.).
14. I am thinking in particular of the kind of ethnocentrism that appears in Huntington's work (1996), but also about the way historians like James (2002) and Ferguson (2003) use incidents in the past as a template for understanding contemporary globalization, in ways that seem anachronistic to me.
15. Many anthropologists have made this point, perhaps most clearly Hannerz (1996).
16. I do *not* mean that the consciousness of cultural difference is a new thing in the world – just that it is more common and more central to identity, at least in Belize, than it has been before.
17. Wilk (1995b). As Amilien says, "Local is associated with geographical roots, tradition, family and other factors of identity, which used to represent the popular culture of food, but the local expression of food now follows professional references and rules" (2003: 189).
18. Otto and Verloop (1996).
19. James, for example (2002), blames the world depression of the early twentieth century and continuing world conflict on the breakdown of free trade. On the other side there are both economic nationalists who see free trade as a threat to sovereignty, and the internationalists who see free trade as a system inevitably biased against the poor and toward large corporations that have little interest in food safety (e.g., Greider 1997; Wallach and Sforza 1999).
20. See Ahmed and Afroz (1996) for an eloquent, but often unrealistic argument for food self-sufficiency and security in the Caribbean.
21. See papers in Barndt (1999) on the human costs and the moral issues raised by the inequities in the North/South labor system, which make cheap tomatoes possible.
22. A point made by Madeley (2000: 52).
23. I am indebted to Moberg (1991) who first made this point about food in Belize.
24. E.g., Feenstra (1997); Cone and Myhre (2000); Sharp *et. al*. (2002); Stanford (n.d.). Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a popular global movement which began in Japan. Community members prepay for shares in the vegetables produced by a local farm, which are delivered regularly throughout the growing season.
25. This begs the question of why anyone in Belize should listen to *me*, since I am another foreigner. All I can say is that I have spent more years working in Belize, listening to Belizeans and trying to understand the country from their point of view than most foreign experts, but even then I would hope people judge my ideas on their merits, instead of their origins.

26. This is my own recipe, learned mostly from watching and listening. Most Belizeans would prefer to make their own coconut milk, but with coconut blight, even in Belize many are using the canned variety from Thailand. Belizeans are very particular about their beans; they must be large deep-red kidney beans rather than pinks or small reds. They have to be cooked to the stage where they are becoming soft, but not mushy. You do not want the beans to "mash up" when they cook with the rice. Some cooks add coconut milk to the stewing beans for added flavor. This rice and beans should be served with some very juicy stewed meat or fried fish. Belizeans marinate their meat with fresh lime juice, red recado and seasoned salt, and stew it with garlic, onion, oregano, black pepper and other spices. On the side there is usually a dollop of potato salad, a British introduction. To be really authentic, make this with "salad crème" instead of mayonnaise, and a small can of mixed vegetables. The final garnish is a strip or two of fried plantain. Many Belizeans like to eat this meal with something spicy; at home this is a small jar filled with vinegar, a couple of slices of carrot, chopped onion and small pieces of fresh orange habanero pepper. This recipe feeds a large Belizean-style family. Enjoy!

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BB *Belize Billboard*, Archives of Belize
HGCA *Honduras Gazette and Commercial Advertiser*, Microfilm, Bancroft Library
BHCBA *The British Honduras Colonist and Belize Advertiser*, Bancroft Library
TC *The Clarion*, Bancroft Library
TA *The Angelus*, Archives of Belize
TCA *Times of Central America*, Bancroft Library
BA *Belize Advertiser*, Archives of Belize, Bancroft Library
NEBHC *New Era and British Honduras Chronicle*, Bancroft Library
BABHG *Belize Advertiser and British Honduras Gazette*, Bancroft Library
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CG *Colonial Guardian*, Bancroft Library
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